The Gospel in Literature

JOSEPH NELSON GREENE

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THE GOSPEL IN LITERATURE

By
JOSEPH NELSON GREENE

God spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.
—*Hebrews 1: 1.*

God's prophets of the Beautiful these poets were.
—*Mrs. Browning.*

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Preface

Literature and the gospel are bosom friends. The stories and teachings of the gospel have been extravagantly borrowed by literature and made to form an essential part of its life. A lover of the gospel should be a lover of literature, for in the latter he finds much of the former. The lover of literature should come to have a wholesome regard for the gospel, for if he reads wisely he sees that the latter furnishes much of the color and life of the former. The combination is a delightful one. To properly appreciate that combination will mean to develop the literary instinct and to cultivate the devotional spirit. To aid somewhat toward this desirable end the following chapters are presented.

If these chapters should encourage preach-

ers and religious teachers to employ more freely the beauty and strength of literature in presenting the gospel, and lead the general reader to a better appreciation of the value of the combined devotional and literary spirit, their mission will not be in vain.

I

ENOCH ARDEN;
OR,
LOVE'S SELF-CRUCIFIXION

ENOCH ARDEN;
OR,
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English literature owes a large debt to Christianity. Much of the subject matter and many of the themes of our best literature have their origin and inspiration in the gospel of Christ. Matthew Arnold says that the chief object of religion is *conduct,* and that conduct is three-fourths of life. This is only another way of saying that religion has to do with life. But literature in its best forms has also to do with life. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Christian religion and literature are mutually helpful. The gospel of Christ has given much to literature, and literature has done much to popularize the gospel. It is a debatable

question as to which debt is the larger, that of literature to the gospel, or of the gospel to literature. But this much is certain, that the debt of literature to the gospel is large, for the spirit and teachings of the gospel color the pages of all our literature. We expect to find these teachings in the Bible, for the Bible is the text-book of the gospel. We look for them in devotional books. But we find them as really in that literature which convenience has labeled secular. Remove from Shakespeare every coloring of the gospel of Christ and you have ended in Lady Macbeth ambition's war with conscience; you have closed the soliloquy of Hamlet, who fears to take his leap into the dark of another world; you have released the soulless Shylock from the penalty his depraved life deserves. Take out of all secular literature the truth that had its birth in the gospel of Jesus, and you have made a wound in the literature of the nations from which the life-blood will speedily ebb away.

The best poetry is only the gospel set to

music. Poets are preachers, though they may little dream that they have preached. In the lines that have come from their pens there are messages of religious import, though the verses that convey them may be called secular. So it comes to pass that we have sermons in secular literature. The sermons are more important than the literature, just as food is more important than the vessel in which it is carried. It is the food we want, whether the vessel be iron or gold.

In Tennyson's poem Enoch Arden we have rich food carried in a golden vessel. The message is noble. It appeals to the heart. It calls to a more unselfish living. And likewise, the story itself is golden. Here is a tale that is tender, beautiful, and ennobling. Enoch Arden is peculiar in this, it is a story without sin. It is a picture that has no iniquity to stain its fair canvas. The actors on this stage are all noble characters. There is no villain here. No impure life walks among the pure. It is true that in one instance a dark mind without the circle

of these actors offers the suggestion that there may be sin within the circle, but the circle itself remains unspotted. The story is clean. Here is a tale of suffering and sorrow, but no sin. Here we see tears and heartaches and breaking of home ties; long years of patient yearning, hoping, and despairing; cries of pain smothered, self-crucifixion, death in unspeakable loneliness, but no sin. Anna Lee lived on in a happy home without sin. Enoch Arden fought his hard fight, suffered alone, endured in hopeless despair, but he went to his grave without sin. Herein is a large element of the glory of this story. And herein is a large part of the message of Enoch Arden, that a man may face the battles, endure the disasters, and suffer the defeats of life, and yet lie down in his grave at last with a clean soul.

The opening scene of the poem is one of tenderness and naturalness. The glory of childhood enshrines it. In the foreground is the sea, with its beach stretching back toward the cliffs, which are crowned with the

village buildings, chief among which are the church and the mill. The picture could not be complete without the church and the mill, for these are the centers of social life. Always the mill has stood as the sign of industry and the agency for satisfying man's need for physical food. And the church has ever stood as the sign of man's higher nature and the agency for satisfying his need for spiritual food. The church and the mill! These two must ever be friends. This twain must ever travel side by side. For where industry thrives and civilization advances, there too must the church go with her sanctifying influence and molding power. And wherever the church goes there too the mill must be, for the church can not exist apart from the industries of men. In the village bordering the beach stood the mill and the church. The background of the picture is complete.

On the beach in the foreground of the picture three children are at play. They are Anna Lee, the prettiest maid of the village;

Philip Rae, the miller's son, and Enoch Arden, a sailor's son, made fatherless by a winter shipwreck. These three children are the chief actors in the story. But they do not remain child actors. As they move before us we see them grow to manhood and womanhood. They feel the strain of life, experience the glow of love and the bitterness of despair, encounter their defeats, and win their victories; they take up life's burdens, make their homes, rear their children, and do their part in the world's work.

But for the present they are children. A childish love affair arises, for Philip Rae and Enoch Arden both love Anna Lee. The children play at housekeeping in a cave beneath the cliff, and both boys would claim the little girl as wife. And when they would come to strife, Enoch Arden, stronger built, would come off victor, and Philip Rae would weep in the wrath of his defeat and say, "Enoch, I hate you." And the little woman would weep too, and ask them not to quarrel, for she would be wife to both.

So childhood grew to manhood and womanhood, and the love of the children grew likewise. Philip and Enoch still loved Anna Lee. But the love of Anna Lee grew toward Enoch Arden. One autumn eventide Philip read in their eyes and faces his own doom. He wisely left them to their bliss, while he went away to face the world alone, bearing in his heart a lifelong hunger. Poor Philip Rae! Behold him, a man with a lifelong hunger in his heart. A type he is of multitudes who walk the earth feeling their hunger and bearing their loads not because of disappointed loves merely, but because of blasted hopes, the injustices of the world, sorrows unspeakable. Few are the men who, as they go, do not bear in their hearts some sort of hunger. But the test of manhood is the ability to fight on and be strong in spite of the hunger. He is a weakling who will sit down in despair because his heart aches. He is a hero who will accept the ache of the heart as a spur urging him on to nobler living. And there are more of these heroes

about us than we think. They have been decorated with no medal of honor, but they are nevertheless heroes, because, while the heart aches, the mind is active, the hands are busy, and the life is true.

Thus Philip Rae was a hero. He went his lonely way, but not to despair. He took up life's tasks. He succeeded in temporal affairs. He gained honor and wealth. He became a leading citizen of the little village. He remained a manly man. But he still bore in his heart his lifelong hunger.

Enoch Arden and Anna Lee were married. Into their home children came. First a daughter came, and then a son. Then, after years had gone, Enoch on an ocean trip was hurt and, far away from home, lay on a bed of affliction. During his misfortune and his absence another child was born into his home. As Enoch saw his family increase there grew up in his heart a desire that his children might have a better education than had been his own. More wealth was therefore essential. An opportunity for

securing the desired wealth seemed to be presented to Enoch in an announcement that a vessel was soon to leave the port and sail to distant lands in quest of gain. Upon this vessel Enoch secured a place as boatswain. It would be weeks before the vessel sailed, and before that time Enoch felt that he would be fully recovered and ready for the voyage.

When sufficiently recovered, Enoch went back to his home to acquaint his wife with his plan. She protested against it, sorrowfully, declaring that despite Enoch's bright coloring of their future prospects she felt sure that if he took the voyage she would never see his face again. But Enoch was more confident and more persistent, and his plans won. Their earnings were invested in a little store, which the wife might manage during Enoch's absence, thus providing a support for the children. Then Enoch went back to the port from which his ship was to sail, having said to his wife that at a certain time on a certain day the ship would

sail past their home, and, though far out at sea, if she would take the glass and look, she might see him standing on the deck. The day and the hour came, and the ship appeared in the distance. Anna took the glass and looked. "She could not fix the glass to suit her eye; perhaps her eye was dim, her hand tremulous." At any rate, the opportunity and the vessel passed, and Anna saw not the face of Enoch. The vessel moved away and was lost in the dim distance. Yes, the vessel was lost and Enoch was lost. As the years passed by, no message came, no voice was heard from that distance. All was as silent as though the vessel had sailed away into the land of the dead.

Meanwhile, what of this quest of Enoch Arden? While we must admire the motive that sent him afar, we are compelled to feel that his wisdom was at fault. He was taking chances too great. He was sacrificing too much that was certain and safe for something woefully uncertain and unsafe. Enoch had a lovely little home with a faithful wife

and growing children. True, they were poor, but happiness had found a nesting-place in that humble home—that was worth more than all the world beside. The humble home where happiness and love abide is richer far than the palace from which happiness and love have flown. It was a bad bargain for Enoch Arden to give up the happiness already his, and go in search of wealth which perhaps should never be his. And yet the mistake of Enoch is one the world witnesses over and over. Too often we miss the joy of present living because we are engaged in a mad chase after something we would possess in the future. The simple life of the present is omitted while we dream of the larger life of the future. Every day brings its own blessings. They should be embraced to-day, and not discarded for a blessing that may possibly come to-morrow. The best philosophy of life is to live each day at its best, and enjoy all the blessings it brings. To-morrow is uncertain. Certainly one should be ever ambitious for better things, but not

at the price of the sacrifice of the opportunities of the present. It is bad living to barter away the certain happiness of to-day for the uncertain prospect of happiness to-morrow.

But what of the wife and children after Enoch had gone? The wife was a poor saleswoman and business manager. The business waned. The baby sickened and died. When the stricken mother had laid the child to rest and sat alone in her sorrow, Philip Rae, still bearing the hunger in his heart, came in to comfort her. But not of self did he think. He thought of Enoch's children, the boy and girl yet left. He begged of Anna the privilege of sending these children to school and caring for all their needs, for he was rich. Enoch might repay him if he wished when he returned. And if he did not so wish, well. At last Anna consented to the proposition, and the children were placed in school. Philip Rae loved them well and lavished much wealth upon them. The children grew, and learned to call him Father Philip. The

memory of their own father faded, and their love for the new father increased. The years went by, and no news of Enoch came. The conviction grew upon all that Enoch was dead. Ten years moved slowly by, and then Philip dared to speak to Anna of the certainty of Enoch's death and of the love in his heart for her. But Anna pleaded for time. She would wait another year, and if no word came from Enoch she would accept the silence as heaven's answer that Enoch was dead. Then she would listen to the desires of Philip.

The year rolled by, and Anna, still in doubt, prayed one month more of time. It was granted, Philip saying, "Take your own time, Anna; take your own time." And so she held him off until another half year had slipped away. Then, in a vision one night, Anna seemed to see Enoch beneath a palm tree, the sun shining brightly above him. To her the vision seemed as a message assuring her that Enoch lived no more on earth, but lived in another world, where the tree of life

was growing and the sun was shining bright for evermore. So her answer was finally given to Philip, and they were wedded. A new home was formed for Anna and her children. After a while a new life came into their home, and Anna became happy in her new estate and almost forgot the sorrows of the past.

But what of Enoch? Not successful was his quest. The ship on which he sailed was called *Good Fortune,* but bad fortune came to ship and crew alike. A storm drifted the vessel far from her course and wrecked her on the shore of a strange island. Enoch and two others clinging to the wreckage were washed ashore. On the island were game and fruit in plenty; but as time moved on, the two companions sickened and died, and Enoch was left alone. As the years wore away the fire of hope died not utterly from his heart, but it was hope long deferred. At last the day of his deliverance came. Another vessel, drifted from her course by a storm, approached the island in search of

water; and Enoch, now like a wild man in appearance, was discovered, pitied by the crew, taken on board, and at last by their efforts landed in the harbor from which he had sailed away years before. He was again near his own home. But now fears as terrible as those that had haunted him on the lonely island possessed him. A power as great as that which had hurried him homeward seemed to lay its hand upon him and stop him from going home. Home? Had he any home? Had he a wife, a child, a home? Was he to go on, to find new-made graves, and have his last lingering hopes blighted? Was he to go on and find worse than graves —his loved ones now the loved ones of another in the light of a home he dare not enter; living, yet dead to him forever?

Here is one of the most tragically terrible situations in all literature. Here is a tragedy not terrible in its blood or crime, but terrible in the unmitigated sorrow of a lonely, friendless heart. It is the tragedy of tears, with no hand to dry them; of a breaking

heart, with no balm at hand; of an agonizing question, with no answer forthcoming; of a soul-burdened cry for friendship and love, with only a mocking suspense for an answer. That is tragedy!

But on Enoch moved, toward the old home village. It was a dark, misty night, and few people were on the streets. On he moved until he stood before the house that had once been his home. But not a light was seen, not a voice was heard. Finally Enoch distinguished upon the door a bill of sale, and, fearing the worst, cried in his despair, "Dead, or dead to me?" Then he turned and went back to the wharf, to an old inn, where he lived in seclusion for several days. Then from the landlady, who was an able gossip, and who failed to recognize Enoch, he heard the story of the death of his own babe, the education of the two children by Philip Rae, and of the marriage of his wife to Philip. And as the woman closed her story with the words, "Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost," Enoch himself re-

peated, "Cast away and lost," and again he murmured, "Lost."

Knowing the worst, and all hope now gone, Enoch felt that he might die in peace if only he could get one more glimpse of Anna's face and know that she was happy. And so one night, when it was all darkness without, and the lights were burning brightly within the home of Philip Rae, Enoch crept up through the darkness close to an open window and looked in. He saw Anna seated on a chair and at her side the daughter, now grown to a young woman. The boy, now tall and strong, was standing not far away. And Philip Rae sat at Anna's side, rocking on his knee a little babe. A picture it was of a lovely, happy home. But when the picture met the eyes of Enoch Arden he staggered like a blow had fallen upon him, and a cry heavy with pain and loud with despair rose from his heart—but it never passed his lips. The only place the cry was heard was in the soul of Enoch and the ear of God. But why did he not relieve the bursting heart by giv-

ing vent to his despair in one mighty cry? Ah, he feared to cry, lest that cry, "like the blast of doom, would shatter all the happiness of the hearth" within. The love of Anna constrained him.

Great is the constraining power of love. It lays its hand upon a life and checks it in its wayward course. It compels conduct. The young man who loves his mother will not by his ungrateful or sinful life drive the dagger of pain into her heart. He would, like Enoch, rather suffer himself than cause her to suffer. The husband who loves his wife will not insist on those practices that destroy her happiness. Love constrains him. The Christian who loves the Lord will sacrifice some of the desires of a selfish life rather than bring pain to the Master's heart. A Christian can in no better way declare his lack of love for Jesus Christ than by doing that which brings sorrow to the Savior's heart and hurt to His cause. Christ said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." That is, "If you love Me ye *will* keep My

commandments. Ye will please Me." If Enoch Arden loves Anna he will not pain her. And so the cry of despair is hushed, and Enoch walks away in the darkness, and Anna is left undisturbed in her happiness. Back to the inn Enoch goes, bearing in his heart his burden and holding his secret until, bowed down with his burden, his life is being crushed out. Sickness overtakes him, and on his deathbed he surrenders up to the landlady his secret, on condition that it should not be revealed until after his death, and revealed then only that Anna may be told that Enoch loved her to the end, and that Philip Rae might be told that Enoch blessed him with his dying strength, and that the children might know that their father's last prayers ascended for them. And so Enoch died, the secret was told, "and when they buried him the little port had seldom seen a costlier funeral."

Why did Tennyson write this poem? Perhaps a purely historical answer would be difficult to give, as the necessary external evi-

dence is not to be found. But from the internal evidence, the content of the poem, we may venture an answer. If we, like Enoch Arden, a castaway on a strange island, should accidentally discover this poem and know nothing of its history or authorship, and should ask why it was written, we would not answer that it was written for the sake of telling a sad story, nor for the sake of romance merely, but rather for the sake of a truth stranger than fiction. That truth is the power and beauty of love as expressed in self-sacrifice. Here is a story of Love's self-crucifixion. Enoch Arden is the personification of heroic love. He loves devotedly. He loves unto toil, unto danger, denial, and sacrifice. He loves unto death.

The highest expression of love is self-crucifixion. Love at its best will suffer even unto death rather than permit its object to suffer. Measure love by the lofty standard of what it is willing to suffer, and you discover its true worth. Lower standards do not evidence love at its best. A man may

give his wife a present—it may or may not be a mark of love. Many a present has passed where no love existed. One may speak a kind word—it is no mark of love. Many a kind word has been born of pity or of policy when love was absent. One may even perform a kind deed that costs a sacrifice, and yet no love may be manifested. There may be nothing more than the milk of human kindness in the deed. You can not test love on these lower planes. But pitch it on the higher plane of self-sacrifice, and you learn its worth. When the husband prayed that he might take upon himself the pain the wife endured, and suffer in her stead,—that was love. When the mother longed to fix upon her life the penalty that had been decreed to her boy, and die for him,—that was love. When God gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have eternal life,—that was love. When Jesus Christ walked to the cross and laid His hands and feet upon it, and spilt His blood, that men

might come to know God,—that was love. Love at its best suffers, and dies if need be, for its object.

Love can reach its best only in a life that is good. Herein is the great message of Enoch Arden. Love and Goodness must ever be boon companions if either becomes her best. Love is her best only when joined with Goodness. Why did not Enoch Arden cry aloud that night when he saw his loved ones happy in the home of another? Why did he not let fly that shriek, and shatter all the happiness of the hearth within? Why was he able to resist so that the cry was smothered? A life weakened by the touch of sin could not have resisted so. But Enoch Arden was possessed of the strength of Goodness and Love combined. And Goodness placed her hand alongside of the hand of Love, and together they stopped the mouth of Enoch Arden, and the fatal cry was hushed. It was Goodness joined with Love. Mephistopheles could not have done that. There was too much of lust in his life. Lady

Macbeth could not have done that. There was too much blood upon her lily-white hands. From lives like these the cry would have fallen, the blast of doom would have sounded, and happiness would have been shattered, for in such lives hate is stronger than love. Sin has strangled Goodness. With Enoch Arden it was not so. He was clean, and therefore he was strong, and therefore Love triumphed. Hence, when he tiptoed from the garden of Philip Rae, lest he might be discovered and the happiness of Anna shattered, he carried in his bosom a broken heart, but two ministering angels walked by his side, and one was called Love and the other Goodness. Sisters they.

Yes, this is the message of Enoch Arden, that he who would love best must live well. Love is evermore crippled by wickedness. The man who spends for drink the money that should bring comfort to wife and children is robbing them not only of his money, but of his love, for whisky dulls the fine edge of love. He who has unbalanced his man-

hood by intoxication can not love as of yore. The man who proves untrue to his marriage vow and submits himself a slave to lust makes it impossible to love wife and home as he should. The man who by craft, deceit, and cruelty defrauds and injures others, to gain unscrupulous ends, has hardened his own power of love until he, like the sin of his life, is cold and relentless. Sin strikes a deathblow at love. Drop one particle of black ink in a glass of pure water, the water is tainted. Another and another drop, and the water is colored. Another and another drop, and the water is black. Every drop of ink spoiled the purity of the water. Love is the water. Sin is the ink. Mix them, and love is tainted. Mix them, and love is colored. Mix them, and behold! love itself is transformed into sin. He who would love much must keep himself clean. If it be suggested that some who have been bad have loved still, let the question also be suggested as to how much stronger, more beautiful, and heroic that love might have been if sin had

been left out, for the message of Enoch Arden is true that sin cripples love, and he who would love best must keep himself pure.

The highest form of human love is that of the soul for its God. Highest because it enriches and ennobles all other love. He who loves God with all his heart will find no difficulty in loving his neighbor. Love for wife and kindred and friends will mean more. The hard tests of life will be more patiently endured. The march up Calvary's hill for the crucifixion of self in some great crisis will be made more possible. And chiefly, the holy life, which is the guiding star of humanity, will be more possible in the presence of love for God.

While the highest form of human love is that of the soul for God, the highest example of love is that of God's love for man. History has some splendid examples of love. Literature has pictured some examples of love that are inspiring, as that of Enoch Arden. But the supreme type is that exhibited in Christ's sacrifice for the world. It was a

crucifixion not only of self, but of a Self the richest the world has known; a Self that was a bond between earth and heaven; a God-man; a type of love and a sacrifice that was, which ought to arouse a response from every noble, grateful soul.

There is an old tradition which tells of a tribe of Seneca Indians once living in the neighborhood of Niagara Falls. They had the custom of holding a festival once every year for the purpose of making an offering to propitiate the Spirit of the Falls. The offering was the most beautiful maiden who could be found in all the tribe. On a certain night, when the moon was shining brightly upon the waters, she was required to step into a white canoe filled with fruits and flowers, and, rowing out to the middle of the river, be swept by the current over the falls to a certain death. On one occasion the maiden chosen by the priests for the sacrifice was a daughter of the chief of the tribe. The chief was a stern and brave man, but he loved his daughter with a tender, passionate love.

Yet, because of her marvelous beauty the daughter was selected as the fairest of the tribe, and the priests declared that she must be offered to the Spirit of the Falls. The brave chief, feeling the justice of the choice made, yielded to the fatal decree and, though with breaking heart, unhesitatingly offered his daughter for the sacrifice. When the fatal night arrived the people were assembled, the moon was shining brightly, and the maiden stepped into the white canoe, paddled boldly out into the current, and drifted toward the falls. Then the waiting multitude saw a strange sight that filled them with awe. The old chief was seen to step into another white canoe, and giving a few mighty strokes, his boat shot alongside the boat of his daughter. Their eyes met. There was a look of infinite love, a swift embrace, and together the chief and his daughter dashed over the falls to the rapids beneath. The old father loved the daughter too much to permit her to take the death journey alone.

That was love. The name of the chief

was revered because he died *with* one he loved. But this story lacks the superlative element. Better would it have been if the chief had stepped into the boat of the girl and died *for* her, leaving her yet among the living. It may be a great thing to die *with* another, but it is infinitely greater to die *for* another. That is what Christ did. When humanity's boat was about to drift over the falls He placed the feet of the doomed race safely on the shore, while He Himself stepped into the boat and went down into the rapids alone.

II

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT;
OR,
GOD AT THE FIRESIDE

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT; OR, GOD AT THE FIRESIDE

One of the deplorable facts in the history of poetry is that the world, while lauding the poetry, is so often compelled to lament the poet. The production is worthy of commendation, while the man who wrote it is often so unworthy that the reader is compelled to apologize for his shortcomings. This is true, because some of the men who have pictured an ideal in literature have been unable to realize that ideal in their own lives. In this class we must place Robert Burns, the author of "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Few men are more beloved as a poet by their countrymen and by the world than Robert Burns. Yet few men are more lamented as a man than he. His poems have

faithfully pictured the life and virtues of the noble peasantry of his brave little land. He has truly sung the glories of Scotland. His verses have touched responsive chords in the lives of all men. Burns the poet is a favorite. But when we speak of Burns the man we must pause to blush and weave a cloak of charity to throw over the multitude of his sins.

Burns committed the glaring mistake of trifling with the affections of his heart in the early days of his life when character was forming. The affections are laid at the very foundations of one's life and are a determining factor in the life. If they are guarded and given a wholesome development they will determine a life of nobility. The life will then become strong and firm in rectitude. But if the affections are tampered with and undermined in youth, their injury will determine an unstable, weakened life, in which an indecisive conflict will be continually waged between nobility and ignominy, between the good and the bad.

This was the mistake of Burns. As a boy of seventeen he had numerous love affairs, wrote verses in praise of many girls, gave himself to the dance and the wine cup, grew in years bearing the early unbalanced traits of character, until finally he became seemingly incapable of constancy. While claiming one woman as wife, he declared his passion for another, and upon the occasion of the death of the latter wrote a beautiful little poem as a tribute to her. When we read the lines to Mary in Heaven we are impressed with their tenderness and intensity of affection. But when we recall that they are lines written by a man to one not his wife, and that when the lines were written he was declaring his love for two women (one of whom was his wife), the verses become robbed of their sweetness, and we feel that somewhere in the life of the man who wrote them there must have been a fundamental moral and ethical lack. But such was Robert Burns. The mistakes of his youth followed him to his grave, as youthful mistakes are wont to do. His bi-

ographers have said two things of him that should stand as a warning to all subsequent generations: (1) "He died in the prime of manhood, miserable and neglected." (2) "In all but his poetry his was a defeated life." A defeated life! What a sad commentary! How much more the life and poetry of Robert Burns might have meant to the world if his had been a *victorious* instead of a *defeated* life!

As it was the well-known "Elegy" that brought Thomas Gray into fame, so it was "The Cotter's Saturday Night" that brought Robert Burns into fame. This poem was written when Burns was twenty-six years of age. The evident purpose was to give a true and immortal picture of a very common phase of Scotch life. The cotter was a well-known character in Scotland. He was one who lived in a cot or cottage on a farm. His position corresponded to the position of a tenant on a farm in this country. The cotter was usually a poor man, and necessarily so, because of his position. Often he had

a large family of children. As the children grew in years it became necessary for them to hire out to work on neighboring farms, in order to help support themselves and the family. Their work took them away from home during the week, but on Saturday night, when the week's toil was ended, the young people came gathering home for the Sabbath rest. Hence on Saturday night there was a glad reunion in the home of the cotter. It is a picture of this Saturday night reunion that Burns presents in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." The scene described is abundant in practical suggestions, and its relation to religious history is significant. The poem therefore furnishes a splendid subject for study from the practical and religious standpoints.

Like a pleasing panorama the scenes of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" are made to pass before us. It is a chill day in November, short as winter days are, and at its close the cotter collects his spades and hoes and finds his way toward his own home. He is

dreaming of the joys of the approaching night and the rest of the Sabbath day. As he approaches his home his little children toddle forth to meet him, and with them the father walks into his humble cot to find a fire glowing in the fireplace, a clean hearthstone, a thrifty wife's loving smile, and a lisping infant which the father is soon rocking on his knee. The poet gives a tender touch of sentiment here when he says that these home attractions combine to beguile his anxiety and care and make him "quite forget his labor and his toil." There is nothing so calculated to drive away the care and fatigue of a hard-laboring man as a home where the hearth is clean and smiles abound and love reigns. Happy the man who has a home of that kind, to which he may betake himself when the brain is weary or the body aches! It is a place of refuge from the strain and storm of life. Wise is the wife who seeks to create that kind of a home and refuge for him whose days are given in toil for her! The cotter had such a wife and such a home.

Presently the older children who through the week have been working on neighboring farms come dropping in. Among them is Jenny, the oldest, now a woman grown in youthful bloom, the love-light sparkling in her eyes. The poet could hardly be true to life and leave out the little love affair which he now hastens to introduce, for love will find its way into the cottage of the poor as well as the palace of the rich. Cupid had been shooting his shafts at Jenny as she had toiled abroad, and now the love-light shines in her eyes. But before the meaning of that love-light is seen, let us look upon a splendid home scene.

Brothers and sisters with father and mother are shut within the four walls of their humble home. What care they for the world without—they have a world of their own within. Mark you, these are brothers and sisters, not merely *kin* by blood. There is a kinship by blood and there is a communion of spirit. Brotherhood or sisterhood is a communion, a fellowship of spirit. There

are boys and girls born of the same parents who are hardly brothers and sisters. The same blood is in their veins, but there is no fellowship of spirit, no mutual proprietorship of common interests; no love. But in the cotter's home we find brothers and sisters. Common poverty and common toil have knit their hearts as one. Hence not with glumness or with thoughts afar from the family circle they sit in each other's presence. Their thoughts are at home. With genuine interest they inquire of each other's welfare and of the experiences of the week since last they met. Each tells the news of what he has seen or heard. The mother sits by with needle and shears mending the children's clothes, until the old garments look almost as good as new. The father sits by mingling wholesome advice with all the narratives of the children. He exhorts them to mind their master well; to labor faithfully and never trifle or play when the master's eye is not upon them. The real character of the father is revealed when he says:

"Be sure to fear the Lord alway—
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray.
Implore His counsel and assisting might;
They never sought in vain who sought the Lord
aright."

But now a rap is heard at the door. The love-light in Jenny's eye burns afresh, for she knows what the rap means. With blushes she confesses to her mother that a neighbor lad was come that way with her that evening, and, his errands done, he would spend the evening in their home. The mother quickly grasps the situation, hurriedly inquires the young man's name, and, learning that he is no wild rake, but a young man of good repute, is well pleased. The young man enters and is taken into the family circle. He is bashful, but all unite to make him feel at home. The father talks of horses, plows, and cows; the mother adds her kindly words, and the young man's heart is filled with joy. The mother is likewise pleased because her daughter is honored with attention, as well as are the other girls of the neighborhood.

It is here, while picturing this simple love affair, that the poet digresses to philosophize on two important themes. One is the blissfulness of pure, innocent love. The other is the perfidy of the villain who could betray a sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth.

"Is there in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch, a villain, lost to love and truth,
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction wild?"

Now the supper hour arrives, and the members of the family assemble around the simple board. Their highland hospitality makes the suitor one at the table. Oatmeal pudding, milk, and cheese a twelve-month old constitute the evening meal. But with as much joy as though they were at the table of a king the members of that contented circle

partake of the supper, while wit and laughter serve as spice for the food.

The evening meal ended, the climax of the scene is presented. Around the fireside they gather—parents, children, and guest. Another glimpse of the father's character is seen as he spreads the open Family Bible upon his knees, chooses a chapter with care, and says, "Let us worship God." Here is a tender picture of a home scene with a phase of life that has ever served as a safeguard to the lives of children and of nations—the family altar. Here there is a church in the home, as was so often true in apostolic times. Parents and children mingle their voices in singing some familiar song. Then "the priestlike father reads the sacred page;" reads of Moses or Abraham, of Job's patience, of Isaiah's wild prophecies; or perhaps of later times, when the Savior walked the earth with men; or of the heroism and struggles of some who followed the Savior even unto death. Then, having ended the reading, the father prays. It is a prayer of

simplicity. The poet is true to life in refusing to put upon the lips of this humble saint a prayer beyond his state. There is no attempt at words or rhetoric. There is no digression to interests far away from this highland home. If this prayer may be called somewhat selfish, it is yet natural. It expresses the longings and hope of the heart of that good father. He prays for his own. But, after all, this is the selfishness that characterizes the majority of our prayers. We pray for our own. Thus the cotter prays. The reach of his prayer is even unto heaven. He looks upon his family circle, unbroken and unstained by sin, and his longing is that it might remain so forever. And he prays that thus they might meet in future days, "no more to sigh or shed a bitter tear," and in the society of each other dwell, while circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

In a scene like this there is something that appeals to our hearts. The man of the busy worldly life may not practice this custom of family prayer in his own home, but

there is something in it which finds him. Men admire religious faith in its simple and sincere expression. They detest the dress of pomp and parade in which faith is sometimes clothed, but they admire simple faith in God. The thing that makes this scene in the cotter's home striking is a religious faith undisturbed by doubt, unstained by sin.

But the scene is not entirely ended yet. Family prayer over and the social evening ended, the friends separate. The guest retires, the children are in bed, and then, as the last act of the night, the parents engage in secret prayer,

> "And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
> That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
> And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
> Would in the way His wisdom sees the best,
> For them and for their little ones provide,
> But chiefly in their hearts with grace preside."

The curtain drops. Silence and slumber rule in the cotter's home, and the angels of God keep vigil there.

The student of literature is compelled to

mark a striking difference between this poem and one like that of "Enoch Arden," by Tennyson. This poem of Burns is chiefly a description—a description of a tender home scene. It is not a story; it is a picture. But "Enoch Arden" is a narrative rather than a description. It is a story as well as a picture. It has movement. It is full of romance and tragedy. It keeps the reader on the tiptoe of expectation. But in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" it is different. Here you see only a picture. It is beautiful. Its colors blend harmoniously. With it we are pleased. It speaks of home, and love, and faith, and God. It lacks the thrilling, sensational elements of "Enoch Arden." But the lack is atoned for by the abundance of practical suggestion. It exalts the home, character, and God. And because "The Cotter's Saturday Night" is a tribute of praise to home, character, and God it will ever have a high place in the affections of the world. As long as home, character, and God are loved this poem will live.

The scene of religious devotion pictured in this poem is one all will commend. It appeals to the heart. But not all will recommend such a practice to modern American life. Many will say the scene is beautiful, but it is not fitted to present conditions. We can not bring such a scene as that into modern life. But why not? As a matter of fact, one of the things American life needs most keenly is the introduction of just such scenes as that. If into this land the cotter's Saturday night could be introduced and transformed so we would have the laborer's Saturday night, the business man's Saturday night, and the professional man's Saturday night, our land would be stronger and safer and the life of our people better.

But be that as it may, there is something about the cotter's Saturday night that appeals to our hearts. Whatever the condition of modern life may be, we enter the home of this cotter and come forth feeling strangely refreshed. In this home tenderness, affection, fidelity to each other, cleanness of life,

and simple faith in God all blend to make a refreshing atmosphere. As the story of "Enoch Arden" is marked for the absence of sin, so is "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Here is no villain, no crime. Lives true and innocent are here swayed by noble purpose. There is a music permeating this scene as sweet as that which stirs the heart as one reads the story of John Alden and Priscilla in "The Courtship of Miles Standish." We are inclined to hold in contempt the Puritan customs, but somehow there yet lingers in our hearts a respect for Puritan virtues. It will be a sad day for our land when we come to despise those virtues. May that time never come!

It will be profitable to analyze this scene in the poem and discover what those elements are which create its wholesome atmosphere and provide its sweet music. Aside from some minor features, which need not be mentioned, there are three chief elements discoverable here which give richness to the scene and provide practical suggestions. These

three mentioned briefly are: Home, Manhood, and God.

Home is exhibited as the center of gravity for the family life. In "The Cotter's Saturday Night" the home occupies a unique place. It has an undisputed sway over these lives. Toward it the lives of all the members of the household turn. When the father's toil is ended it is of home he thinks, and homeward he goes. When the children close the work of the week it is of home they think, and toward home they go. Home is the meeting-place of the members of the family. It is the center of the social life. No substitute for the home is offered or needed. We may be unconscious of it, but it is nevertheless true that this striking exhibition of the home is one element of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" that endears it to our hearts and causes us to love the poem. This poem speaks in loud language the value of the home as a center of family life.

To substitute other institutions or places for the home is a dangerous proceeding.

When a child comes to the place where it goes home only when there is no place else to go, when other places and attractions are exalted and the home despised, it has come to a dangerous place. Let home be a spot loved by every child. The parent, too, needs to realize the importance of making the home so attractive that the children love it. The cotter was wise in this respect. The most effective sphere for the moral training is the home. The home molds the child that makes the man. Its influence should be the best. The education should begin early. A mother asked a minister when she should begin the education of her child, who was then four years old. He replied, "Madam, if you have not already begun you have lost those four years." The advent of the child is the signal for the process of home education and home influence to begin. No better compliment can be paid home or parents than to find the children loving the home and longing to abide beneath its roof.

The crime of modern society is the at-

tempted dethronement of the home. There are various substitutes which society is offering for the home circle. Chief among these may be mentioned the club and the lodge. There is certainly a legitimate place in society for the club and the lodge, but when these become a substitute for the home, or in any way usurp the authority of the home, then they have become a menace to society. The home is injured then by their presence. When a man belongs to so many lodges that he has no night in the week for his family, he is guilty of a gross transgression. When a woman is so absorbed in clubs that she neglects the interests of her children and forgets the joy of home life, she has become intemperate in her conduct and is making herself a curse rather than a blessing. There are some homes literally clubbed to death, and some communities have met the same fate. It would be a good thing for some of these club-dazed people to take down "The Cotter's Saturday Night" and see in it a picture of the best club under heaven,

the *home club,* and ask themselves if it would not be a good idea to start a club of that kind. The best club on earth is the home club.

Manhood is exalted in this poem as the worthy guardian of home and nation. In the scene presented the cotter is the chief character, and the cotter is a *man.* He is poor, but a man. Not learned is he, but a man. He is a man whose presence graces and dignifies the home circle and whose character gives strength to the land he loves. Note some of the elements of his manhood. He has loyalty to and love for his home. He is in his element in the presence of wife and children. Home is the dearest spot on earth to him. That is an evidence of manhood. It is no evidence of manhood to belittle the home and imagine that it is a good place for women and children, but that men had better be on the street or in the lodge, club, or saloon. The man who exalts his home and is proud of his family is one who has the fine fiber of manhood. But the man who counts it a weakness to stay around home

and associate with his family is one who lacks in the essential elements of manhood.

Our cotter was also a man of clean personality. There are some things conspicuous for their absence from this scene. There is no portrayal of our cotter crowned with a halo of tobacco smoke. No profanity is heard falling from his lips. No fumes of whisky are detected on his breath. It would be extremely difficult to associate such things with this picture of the cotter. He is a clean man. There are some practices in the present days which are commonly associated with manhood, but which lack much of being manly. They are unclean and senseless. Manhood is impaired by their indulgence. Manhood at its best is clean and rational. It does not stoop to injurious practices merely because they happen to be common. Any unclean, injurious practice prevents reaching the highest ideal of manhood just to that degree in which the practice is indulged. Our cotter was manly because he was free from injurious habits.

Again, the cotter was a manly man because he possessed a religious spirit. A striking thing is said of him. He took the Word of God, turned its pages, and presided at the family altar with "patriarchal grace." Something priestly is in his make-up. He is at home with the Sacred Book and while ministering concerning divine things. He talks with the children of things religious. A wise father he! If fathers more universally were able to minister and talk as this cotter, the lives of the children would be safer. It is said that Voltaire was once discussing his skeptical ideas with some friends at his table, when he suddenly exclaimed: "Hush, gentlemen, till the servants are gone. If they believed as we talk, none of our lives would be safe." Anti-religious views furnish little safety for morals or for lives. But faith in God is a guarantee of safety for both. Happy the father who can teach that faith to his children. Our cotter could so teach it. He has manhood, because he loves his home; he is clean in his life and is on familiar terms

with God. Burns could not realize that manhood in his own life, but he was wise to picture it as the crowning glory of the cotter's life.

God at the fireside is the guarantee of a nation's glory and permanence. It is after describing the scene in which faith, prayer, and the Word of God form so large a part, that the poet says, "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs, that makes her loved at home, revered abroad." This is the wise deduction from the entire scene. The people in whose breasts are love for home and love for God are people all but invincible. They are the liberty lovers and home defenders of the world. Read history, and it will be seen that those peoples who have revered God and brought Him into their homes and hearts are the peoples against whom tyranny has had to wage its hardest fight. The yoke of oppression has ever rested uneasily upon their shoulders. They have been patriotic, brave, and persistent in their struggle for liberty. Witness such peo-

ples as those of Switzerland, South Africa, and this loyal little land of Scotland. God at the fireside has given strength to national life and to individual greatness. It is in the presence of the divine that the greatest ideas have been born and the greatest works have been performed. Among the great paintings at Florence are the angels of Fra Angelico. They are said to have been painted when the artist was on his knees praying and reverently pursuing his work. They were born of prayer. In speaking of the splendor of this work Michael Angelo said, "Surely the good brother visited Paradise and was allowed to choose his models there." Yes, his models were chosen there. His work was done in a divine atmosphere. Here is a message from "The Cotter's Saturday Night," that the best life is lived and the best work is done in the divine presence. This poem is loud in its cry to enthrone God in the home and in the individual life.

It is in this strain that Burns closes the poem. The last verse is a prayer that God

may continue to abide within the land the poet loves.

"O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart;
Who dared to nobly stem tryannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O, never, never, Scotia's realm desert."

This is his prayer. And here is one of the messages of the poem to us,—that God must be our abiding help if our land and lives are to be their best and safest.

Give God's Word the place it deserves as the foundation of our faith and as the guide for our feet. Do not get the idea that the Bible is obsolete. Its interpretation may be a matter of variation in some minor details, but its truth will forever stand unhurt by all the charges of criticism or of skepticism. This little verse is a gem of prophecy and of faith:

"Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"'"How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one,' he answered, then with twinkling eye:
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'

"And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet though the noise of falling blows were heard,
The anvil is unworn—the hammers gone."

God's Word is an anvil upon which the blows of opposition may fall without avail. It will remain when the hammers are gone. Heed the message of this poem and exalt the Word to its rightful place in the life of home and land.

Likewise give *worship* of God the place it deserves. This message, too, the poem speaks. We need the old-time faith and praise, secret prayer, the family altar, God at the fireside. Let this religious devotion exist, and we will have a land freer of greed and graft, and blessed with a permanence which neither time nor foes can endanger. Let the scene of "The Cotter's Saturday

Night'' be repeated all over our land. Exalt worship. Revere the Word. Give God a chance. Our lives will be cleaner. Our history will become more glorious. Our Nation will be more secure. Give God a chance.

III

THE VILLAGE PARSON, FROM GOLDSMITH'S "DESERTED VILLAGE"

THE VILLAGE PARSON, FROM GOLDSMITH'S "DESERTED VILLAGE"

Oliver Goldsmith, author of "The Deserted Village," was an enigma. The study of his character is an unfailing source of interest, because it reveals a puzzle hard to solve. As one reads his life he is filled with astonishment and wonder; astonishment that one so worthless, seemingly, could ever command the respect of the literary world; and wonder as to what sort of a creature the man really was. Was he a blockhead or a genius? Was he a knave or a saint? Was he a reformer or a fool?

His was a life in which nature mingled some queer ingredients and through which she played some queer capers. He was good

and bad. He was wise and foolish. He acted strangely and wrote beautifully. His queerness began with boyhood. He was known in school as a dull boy, and even in college rested under the stigma of being an inferior student. As a boy, however, he showed some genius for poetry and wrote verses, consigning them to the flames almost as fast as he wrote them. As a man he showed much vacillation and lack of purpose, mingled with a reckless disposition. He chose companions who were bad, and formed unfortunate habits. Often his reckless ways brought him into difficulty and reaped severe condemnation. But withal he had a heart so big and a spirit so good at the bottom that a multitude of his sins were covered. At one time he essayed to study law, and fifty pounds were given him by an uncle, with which to begin his education; but he lost the money at a gaming house before he reached the school. Again, he studied medicine, and practiced it in a suburb of London for a year or more; but he amounted to little more than

a quack doctor, and soon gave up the profession. Again, he traveled through some European countries on foot, with his harp, and sang and played, supporting himself as a tramp musician. Thus from one calling and attempt to another he drifted, like a feather blown by the wind. But meanwhile he possessed a heart of love and had the music of poetry in his soul. And when he surrendered himself to the good that was in him, and listened to the singing of the Muses, he gained the attention of the world. And to-day he has the distinction of being one of the most loved writers in English literature. But, as in the case of Burns, while we may love the poems we find ourselves compelled to apologize for the poet.

"The Deserted Village," in which the description of the Village Parson occurs, is said to be the finest poem Goldsmith ever wrote. It was written to express the poet's sorrow at the decay of rural scenes and peasant life, while luxury and pomp seemed to flourish. It is in one view a poetic treatise

on political economy. The view of Goldsmith has been criticised as being unwarranted, yet we need to remember that the dangers Goldsmith decried in this poem one hundred and forty years ago (1770) are the very dangers we are crying out the loudest against to-day. The two great social and political evils we decry to-day are the dangers of wealth amassed in the hands of the few, and the danger of a decayed citizenship exhibited in dishonesty and graft. Now listen to Goldsmith's deliverance concerning these evils:

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.
> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade—
> A breath can make them as a breath has made—
> But the bold peasantry, a country's pride,
> When once destroyed can never be supplied."

To all of which the majority of us will say, "Amen." When that day comes in which wealth accumulates and men decay, a dangerous day is at hand for any nation. Manhood enshrined in poverty is a better safe-

guard for a nation than degeneracy clothed in wealth.

The "village" described by Goldsmith as having become deserted and fallen into decay is generally supposed to be Lissoy, in County Westmeath, Ireland, a village where his father, who was a minister, once had a parish. It is not supposed that the description is true to the actual condition of the village, but rather that the village furnished the material and suggestion for the poet's imaginative description. The village was once the poet's home, and in his thought he sees wealth accumulate and men decay until the village is deserted, her landmarks removed, the old home place destroyed. The poet had hoped, after the long and wild wanderings of his life were over, to find a resting-place and burial spot here in old age.

"And as the hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew;
So had I hoped, life's long vexation past,
Here to return and die at home at last."

But now all is changed. This hope is blighted, and the poet, as he looks upon the deserted village, cries:

> "Thy sports are fled and all thy charms withdrawn,
> Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen
> And desolation covers all the green."

That word "desolation" seems to contain the burden of the poet's complaint. The village is all desolation. And so will be the land in the moral and material sense, when wealth accumulates with the few and men decay.

It is not with the poem as a whole, however, that we are concerned, but with the description of one character who lived in this village in the days of its prime. It is the village parson. This is one of the most beautiful descriptions of one of the most saintly characters found in literature. And the question instantly arises, "Where did Goldsmith get his model?" A suggested answer may be found in the fact that Goldsmith's father was a preacher in the village of this poem; and while there is no positive

historic evidence to determine this point, we may infer that just as the village of his youth suggested the village of the poem, so the father of his youth suggested the parson of the poem. Mrs. Hodson, a sister of Goldsmith, believed the "parson" to be a portrait of the father. If this is the case, here is one of the finest compliments ever paid by a son to his father. It is suggestive of an incident in the life of General Lew Wallace. In "Ben Hur" he portrayed a beautiful character, the mother. When the book was finished Wallace requested his stepmother to read the story, and asked for her opinion. She replied that the book was a beautiful, rare story, and that the character of the mother was magnificent. And then she said, "Son, how in the world did you ever get your conception of a mother like that?" The son replied, "Mother, don't you know it is a picture of your own dear self?" And if the father of Goldsmith had asked where his son got his conception of the village parson, he could doubtless have said,

"Father, it is a picture of your own dear self." That father's influence doubtless had more to do with the successful outcome of the wayward boy's life than we know. What would have been the ultimate end of such a reckless nature had it not been steadied by a vision of a father saintly and good? Perhaps the good had been entirely submerged and Goldsmith's name had never been known; for visions of such parents' lives have a wonderful restraining influence on the lives of reckless children.

This incident was once related in an address by the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis:

"Recently an old man gave us the story of his wonderful career. In an hour of temptation he determined to disappear from his home and city, to forswear every duty, and to turn his back on honor. In his madness he went to the railway station, for the new career was now to begin. But suddenly, as he stepped from the carriage, he thought he saw his old father, long since dead, standing in

the door of the station. The father lifted his right hand, and the youth heard a voice saying, 'My son, go back! Go back!' The man turned and fled as though an angel with a flaming sword had waved it in his face. An hour later, and once more he had taken up his accustomed task. But from that day he looked back to the event as to a moment when his feet stood on the edge of a precipice. He tells us that forty years have come and gone since that weak hour, and that he still believes that vision was vouchsafed to preserve his soul."

To some of us that reads like the history of our own experience, for at the moment of a great temptation, when we were about to enter a pathway of sin and ruin, the vision of a saintly father or mother has stood across our pathway and said, "Go back!" and we have gone back to honor and a better life. Here is an obligation of parenthood, to make possible a vision before the child that shall say in an hour of danger,

"Go back." God pity the child who can have no such vision as that because he has no such parents as that!

When one reads "The Deserted Village," it is the picture of the Parson that rises above everything else. Goldsmith himself compared this noble life to some tall cliff that lifts its awful form, swelling from the vale and midway leaving the storm,

> "Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Literally that describes the position of this character as this writer sees it in its relation to the rest of the poem. It rises like the tall cliff above the storm and clouds of other environments. The decay of sweet Auburn, the character of the stern schoolmaster, the prophesied decay of the land, all sink into the valley beneath the clouds, while the character of the village parson rises into the upper sunshine. Let us note the beautiful description and analyze the character and

discover the elements which add beauty and greatness to this life.

Of the village parson, Goldsmith says:

"A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
And ne'er had chang'd or wish'd to change his place;
Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
For other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More skill'd to raise the fallen than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings but relieved their pain;
The long remember'd beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sate by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shoulder'd his crutch, and shew'd how fields were won,
Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe:
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side:

But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
Even children follow'd, with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleas'd him, and their cares distrest;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs, were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.

The question may arise as to why the description of the village parson is given such

a prominent place in the poem. The answer may not be far to seek when we remember that the parson was perhaps the most prominent character in the village. In olden days, even to a greater degree than to-day, the minister was a prominent person in any community. He was a leader in almost every sense; a necessity and fixture. In our study of "Enoch Arden" it will be remembered we called attention to the fact that the poet gave a place to the mill and the church in his description of the village. In his poem, Goldsmith does the same in the opening lines. It is natural, for these are the essential marks of civilization. As the church and mill are essentials of community life, so the miller and the minister are essentials. Plutarch once, after traveling far and wide, came home to remark that he had found cities without walls, literature, coin, or kings—without forum or theater; but that there was no city, nor would there ever be a city, without temple or church. And so the church has ever been prominent, the minister has been

prominent. Formerly the "English pulpit combined the functions of the lecture, the hall, library, newspaper, and books," says some one, and truly. The minister was the source of information in all these ways. He was teacher, lecturer, news agent, and preacher combined. His sphere has been narrowed to-day by the growth of books and libraries, by the multiplication of newspapers and lecture platform. In keeping with the spirit of the age the minister's work has become more special than general. He is to-day a specialist in Biblical, moral, and spiritual lines. He is no longer the newspaper or library of a community; but he is a moral physician, a spiritual light and hope, a righteous dynamo. It will be noticed that it is in this light that Goldsmith describes the character of the village parson. It is as a moral and spiritual leader; a *character* so saintly in itself that it stands as an example, exhortation, and inspiration to every one who knew the life. It was in this sense that the parson was especially prominent in the vil-

lage, and therefore he is prominent in the poem.

But the Village Parson is presented at this time for the sake of a study of his character. Hence to the analysis of the character we apply ourselves.

The only adverse criticism which one can imagine as being offered against the character is that its elements are of the gentle, passive kind rather than the active, aggressive kind; and that therefore we have a character effeminate rather than stalwart. But a greater mistake would be difficult to make. Such a criticism is based on the common error that good is allied with weakness, and that wickedness and strength of character are companions. But such is not the case. It is the reverse of the case. Goodness is strength, though it may make no commotion in its manifestation. And wickedness is weakness, though it may make much commotion in its manifestation. Men have said that Christ's character lacked the sturdy, heroic elements, such as courage and endur-

ance, because it is represented as pure and meek and peaceful. But they make a mistake; for when the need came, Christ gave the greatest exhibition of courage and endurance the world has ever seen. Witness the agony of Gethsemane and the crucifixion on Calvary, while in the midst of it all the spirit of the man remained true and unruffled. That was heroism of the highest type. And the truly heroic spirit is stored up in the character that is pure and good and gentle. And when the need comes, such a character will show it has the sterner virtues and has the stuff of which heroes are made.

Such is our Village Parson. He has the gentler qualities of a saintly character, but these are only the storehouse of the more fiery virtues. You can trust a man like him anywhere. Place him on a battlefield, where the interests of home and land are at stake, and he will fight like a Phil Sheridan. Place him in a crisis where terrors appall and death lurks near, and he will stand with firm feet and unblanched face, while those you said

were possessed of the sterner virtues will tremble and seek a coward's retreat. Such a character is the Village Parson. He is a saint with the elements of a hero.

He has a worthy reputation. "A man he was to all the country dear." Everybody loved him because everybody spoke well of him; he had a splendid reputation. And herein is a compliment paid not only to the parson, but to the community; for a good reputation is a joint product of a good man and a good people. Have you thought of that? We imagine sometimes that a reputation is determined by the individual himself, but it is not. His character is; but his reputation is determined largely by the community, and that because people will see other lives so much in the mirror of their own lives. It would be impossible for an angel to have an unquestioned reputation in a community of devils; they would see the angel in the mirror of their own lives. Christ did not have a first-class reputation with some people. They said He was in league with

Beelzebub. They said it because they were themselves in league with Beelzebub. And so it often happens that a good man is given a bad name, slandered, because of the badness in which he lives. We can't always determine our reputation, but we can determine our character; and it is a comfort to remember that Almighty God does n't care a fig about the reputation, but He does care everything about the character.

Now, the Village Parson was fortunate in having a good reputation; but he was more fortunate in having a good character. There is but one expression that will fitly describe this character, and that is, "The Saintly Character."

There are many traits of character here, but the term *saintly* may include them all. Here are such virtues as purity, love, charity, truth, faith, holy influence. It is a saintly life; the kind we admire, though we may not realize the ideal; the kind which makes a community rich, though its worth may go unnoted.

Notice the Parson's integrity—absolute rightness. Here is a man clean, honest, trustworthy. He has passed the point of compromise with any form of worldliness or wrong. "E'en his failings leaned to virtue's side." What a volume of history is written in those words! Write them in your mind and heart, and if you remember nothing more of this address or of the Village Parson, remember this: He was the man of whom it was said, "E'en his failings leaned to virtue's side." Here is a confession we must all make—failings are our heritage in this life. None of us is absolutely perfect. When any one preaches the doctrine of a perfection that releases from all defects and failings, he is witnessing against himself that he is ignorant of the Bible and human nature. We will have failings. But here is the redeeming consideration: we can, if we will, ordain that these failings lean to the side of virtue rather than vice. Better be criticised for leaning too far toward right than too far toward wrong; and it will be for one or the

other you will be criticised. If it is a question of intemperance, better be called a teetotaler than a moderate drinker. The results are much better. Doctor Torrey in one of his addresses gives this testimony: "I recall a moderate drinker who I don't think was ever intoxicated in his life. He despised a drunkard, but he laughed at the abstainer. That man had three sons. Every one of the three became a drunkard." Better had it been for him to have been called a teetotaler!

If it is a question of honesty, better be called too scrupulous than dishonest. If it is a question of religion, better be called too careful of conduct than be classified with a crowd of worldlings. When you are passed the way of all the world there is no more glorious tribute that can be chiseled in the marble above your dust than this, "His failings leaned to virtue's side," for in that all may read a life clean, honest, true.

Unselfishness is prominent here. He was unselfish in his ambition and possessions,— "rich at forty pounds (two hundred dollars)

per year." "Unpracticed to seek for power by doctrines fashioned to the varying hour." Not his desire was it to be the builder of a city, or the leader of an army, or the master of millions, or by the achievement of some great feat to have his name forever inscribed on the pages of history. His spirit was like the Master's, of whom a great skeptic said, "No man allowed the interests of humanity to predominate over the interests of self-love so much as He." The Village Parson had caught the Master's spirit. Up Calvary's side with his Lord he had marched and nailed self-interests to the tree, and as self-interests were crucified, humanity's interests were resurrected. So there grew up the spirit, too, of altruism.

Altruism is prominent here, and this is but the reverse side of unselfishness—and these two are philanthropy. Philanthropy is an open hand, the back of which is unselfishness, the palm of which is altruism. The Village Parson was a philanthropist. He had altruism. "To relieve the wretched was

his pride." "He watched, and wept, and prayed, and felt for all." He served. And here is a great crying need of the present day; a service not for self utterly, but for others much. The world is self-crazy. It has forgotten the brother. Man has forgotten that he is his brother's keeper. He has forgotten that he *has* a brother. This is the crime for which our brothers' blood will cry out against many of us at the bar of God. He who is blessed with time and talent, and uses it all on self while the world suffers, is guilty. He who has money and spends it all on self and none for the good of mankind, is a sinner before God. The commonest sin of the world is selfishness. It is the sin of which the saloonkeeper is guilty. The gambler is guilty of it. The thief and murderer are guilty of selfishness. Christians who have a good time, while God's cause halts and the world hungers, are guilty of it. It is the common sin. Refreshing is it to find a man like this, of whom it may be said, "To relieve the wretched was his pride."

Godliness was the climax of his character. God was his theme. To lead to God was his business. "All his serious thoughts had rest in heaven." He "allured to brighter worlds and led the way." Here was a man who had friendly intercourse with God. Like the telegrapher who sits at his key and feels that the clicking sounds are registered off yonder in the silence and distance, he lived at the keyboard of prayer, and when he touched the instrument he knew that off yonder in the station by the Throne the message was received; and as he waited, back the answer came. We talk of wireless telegraphy as though it were something new. It is not new; it is as old as the ages. With it Abraham sent his petition flying over the doomed city of Sodom. Moses by it flung his voice far beyond Sinai's flaming summit; John by it sent his word across the sea of glass. By it to-day from all points of the compass the prayers leap to the common receiving station at the courts of our God, and answers come back again. Our serious thoughts, too, may

find rest in heaven. And thus are earth and heaven linked together. The saintly life must be a life of prayer.

Such lives as these are those which men love and upon which God can depend. When one reads a description like this and lays the book aside and sits in silence a moment, he almost expects to hear a voice from the heavens saying, "This is a beloved son in whom I am well pleased," for we feel that God is pleased with and can depend on a life like this.

A traveler crossing the ocean recently was caught in a bad storm, and relates this experience. He, being a little alarmed, went up to the captain and said, " 'Cap, can we weather it?' 'Put your ear to that tube,' was the reply. I did so, and could hear the steady 'chug' of the engines as they performed their full duty. 'Down there,' he said, 'is the chief engineer, and he believes in me. I 'm up here, and I believe in him. I rather guess we 'll ride this blow out.' " The traveler adds: "I did not worry any

more. With two such men standing together for safety of ship and passengers, I was content to go to my stateroom and sleep as if I were on land."

When God can point to a man down here and say, "There is a man I believe in," and that man can point up and say, "There is a God I believe in," you have a combination that guarantees safety and service. Let the vessel of the Church be manned thus, let any righteous cause be manned thus, and the outcome is assured. God is ever trustworthy, but what He wants is *men,*—men whom He can trust, men who are saintly men.

O, for saintly men! We need them to walk through the ranks of society, that iniquity-smitten men may touch the hem of their garments and feel a new virtue in their lives. We need them to stand in the realm of politics with faces transformed and garments glistening with honor and truth, until greed and graft shall become fearful and afraid and hide their faces in shame. We need them to walk down the aisle of business, exerting

the power of righteous influence until from the bosom of unscrupulous men the demons of dishonesty, deception, and trickery shall run to drown themselves in a sea of darkness.

But the road to that saintly life is the one the Village Parson traveled. There is no other. It is the road of *faith* and *prayer* taught in God's Word. Let me therefore commend to all this Word as the text-book and guide for the saintly life. Some one has called it the book of two pages, a red page and a white page. The red page is the blood of Christ, the white one the holiness of God. True. Read the red page, and you see the cleansing from unrighteousness, for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Read the white page, and you see the saintly character; we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. This Book is the way. All the good have trod this pathway. The saints of ages gone, the village parson and all his kind, your fathers, your mothers have read the page of red and the page of white; and

reading, have been made whole. Dear old Book! Precious Book! Mother's Book, father's Book. In it you learn the way to the saintly character here—the way of life hereafter. The saintly life possessed here is eternal life possessed herafter.

IV

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL; OR, THE SACRAMENT OF DAILY SERVICE

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL;
OR,
THE SACRAMENT OF DAILY SERVICE

Bishop Quayle in his "Jean Valjean" says: "Christ has slipped upon the world as a tide slips up the shores, unnoted, in the night; and because we did not see Him come—His presence is not apparent. Nothing is so big with joy to Christian thought as the absolute omnipresence of Christ in the world's life." Let us grasp this thought of the omnipresence of God in the world's life. When the scientist searches far in nature he finds much of God and comes back to tell us God is everywhere. And when the student of literature searches the libraries of the Christian nations for nineteen centuries past, he finds much of the story and the spirit of the

Christ and comes back to tell us the Christ-tide has been slipping up the shores of the centuries and that it has come into the thought and books of men until the world is full of it.

The world of letters is big with the spirit of Christ. There is a strange legend of a world that grew colorless in a single night. The color faded from the sky; the sea became pale and motionless; the green vanished from the grass and the color from the flowers; the fire died from the diamond, and the pearl lost its light. Nature put on her robes of mourning, and the people who lived there became sad and afraid. A world had lost its life and light. If to-night, with one sweep of the arm, you brush from literature the Christ, the scenes and suggestions from His life, the spirit which He exhibited, the principles for which He stood, you would have a world made colorless in a night. It would be the world of letters, for Christ is the color thereof. This truth is forcefully illustrated in the themes we have presented in the pre-

ceding pages. Take the Christlike love out of "Enoch Arden," and what have you left? Take the Christlike faith and prayer from "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and the Christlike character from the Village Parson, and you have nothing left but faded flowers. And what shall we say of the "Vision of Sir Launfal?" Whatever our interpretation may be, we all agree it is full of the Christ. Take Christ from it, and you have left only a soulless thing.

"The Vision of Sir Launfal" has its roots deeply buried in the soil of history and poetry, and to understand the nature of the poem we must know something of the soil. The background of the poem is the old legend of the "Holy Grail." The Holy Grail was the cup which the Lord used in the last supper on the night before crucifixion. An ancient legend declared this cup was secured by Joseph of Arimathea, who wished to preserve something which belonged to Christ and who brought it to England, where it was handed down from generation to generation,

being committed to those whose lives were holy. But in the course of time the cup came into unholy hands and was lost. Thenceforth it became a favorite task of the knights of those days of chivalry to go in quest of the Holy Grail. Legendary accounts of these quests became rife. They employed the imagination of poets and historians, who in their accounts mingled fact with legend and romance until it became difficult to distinguish one from the other.

In the sixth century lived a semi-legendary king known as King Arthur, who formed in his court a round table, where he assembled many noble knights who performed many noble achievements. There are legends of the attempts of these knights to find the Holy Grail. From the legendary accounts of this round table Tennyson wrote his "Idyls of the King," among which is the search for the Holy Grail. It was from Tennyson's Holy Grail that Lowell received inspiration for "The Vision of Sir Launfal."

In Tennyson's "Holy Grail" the knights

give themselves to a year's search for the Grail, and three of them are able to catch a vision of it; one only is able to possess it, Galahad. And here is the pivotal point upon which the story turns. Two were not able to possess, because in the two there was too much of sin and self. But the third found the Grail, because he had been willing to lose himself to find it. In the castle of the king there was a chair known as Merlin's chair, in which, if one sat, he lost himself. Galahad had sat within the chair, for he would lose himself to find the Grail. Here is the great thought of the search for the Grail—the losing of self. And this, too, is a chief thought in "The Vision of Sir Launfal."

It was after reading the "Holy Grail" of Tennyson that Lowell began writing "The Vision of Sir Launfal." He wrote in the heat of inspired passion. He himself had caught a vision; for it is difficult to read the "Holy Grail" without catching a vision and feeling a new inspiration. Lowell wrote under inspiration. In about two days this

splendid poem in its finished form came from his heart and pen, and it is said in its production he hardly took time to eat or rest. In the glow of his inspiration he produced a work which is at once a poem, a philosophy, and a theology. It is profound; so profound that a casual reading will not reveal its riches. They, like diamonds and gold, must be searched for. It will be an aid to our understanding of the poem if we give an analysis and explanation of it before we enter deeper into its philosophy.

The poem may be divided roughly into five divisions. First is the approach, consisting of the first verse only. Then there is a prelude to part one, followed by part one itself, as the poet has arranged it. Then a prelude to part two, followed by part two itself. Or, to put it in another way, the poem consists of the approach, two introductions, and two parts; five divisions in all.

The approach. This is the first stanza. We have given it a separate division because it has no essential connection with the theme

of the poem, but is rather a description of the poet's approach to the theme. It pictures a musician at his instrument, letting his fingers wander dreamily over the keys until the very inspiration of the sounds causes the birth of a more definite music in his soul, and his wandering, dreamy notes are called in from far away and made to do service in expressing the real theme of his soul. Thus the poet approaches the theme of his production. Beginning far away and indefinitely, it comes nearer and nearer and becomes clearer, and under the inspiration of his dreaming he is able to create and produce the theme of this splendid poem. But the poem itself is a picture of inspired effort and achievement, so that a chain of inspiration runs through the first part of the poem. The organist is inspired to his theme by the sound of his music. The poet is inspired to his production by the voices of legend from afar and of nature and life near. And Sir Launfal is inspired to his task by the beauty and brightness of a June day. This is the

general method of approach. The first stanza with the musician is the suggestion of it.

The *introduction* to part one continues the thought of inspiration as it concerns the quest of Sir Launfal. The argument runs somewhat like this. Not only in our infancy, as another poet has said, do heavenly inspirations lie about us, but over our manhood the skies still bend. Heavenly influences are still present. They are freely given. Other influences cost a price. "Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us." " 'T is heaven alone that is given away, 't is only God may be had for the asking." And one of heaven's richest free gifts is a June day. "June may be had by the poorest comer." "And what is so rare as a day in June?" It is heavenly inspiration abundant. It is this inspiration of the June day that causes the knight, Sir Launfal, to undertake his search for the Holy Grail; and under that inspiration he prepares for the keeping of his vow and the beginning of his quest. Thus the introduction ends.

Part one opens with Sir Launfal ordering his spurs and richest mail, for to-morrow he will go over land and sea in search of the Holy Grail. But to-night he will sleep, not on a soft pillow, but on a bed of rushes, hoping that before the morning comes some vision will be vouchsafed him which will serve as a guide in his quest for the Holy Grail. The vision came. The vision is given in the poem as naturally as though it were real history; and we may, for the sake of the truth taught, forget it was a vision and think of the story as real.

Summer sunshine and beauty are everywhere as Sir Launfal rides forth from the castle—everywhere except in the castle itself. But it, with its cold wall, its dark towers, and closed gates, stands as an "outpost of winter, dark and gray." From the dark tower Sir Launfal dashes forth, mounted on his best charger, his armor glistening as though it had gathered up all the rays of the summer sun and flashed them forth in one mighty blaze. It is summer everywhere. But as Sir

Launfal rides forth he notes by the side of the castle gate a leper crouching on the earth and begging with outstretched palm. What will the knight with the noble motive in his soul of finding the Holy Grail do now? You get the answer in a feeling of loathing which fills his soul, while the flesh beneath the armor begins to creep in its disgust, and he tosses the beggar a piece of gold in scorn. He rides on, but the voice of the beggar sounds in his ear, speaking a new philosophy of charity. The substance of the philosophy is this: The gold that is given from sense of duty is worthless. That is no true alms which the hand can hold. That is the true alms, though it be small, which is given to "that which is out of sight." "That which is out of sight." Ah, what is "that which is out of sight?" Not a hungry mouth or a naked body. It is that cord of divinity which runs through human nature and binds all men together as brothers. We speak of the brotherhood of man. On what is it based? Not on blood or color; not on posi-

tion or condition; not on wealth or education: but on this, that we are all sons of God. There is in all our natures that divine element which is the common cord which binds us all as brothers. In this are we brothers, not that we have a face that is white or yellow or black; not that we have a blood that is blue, or a common education or position; but because we have a common divine element—are sons of God. This is "that thread of all sustaining Beauty which runs through all and doth all unite." Runs through leper? Yes. Through knight? Yes, through all. Ah, brother, learn that truth and make it operative in your life, and you have found the Holy Grail. And Sir Launfal hears the words of this philosophy ringing in his ears; and he will find the Holy Grail now, for the beggar has pointed out the way, and Sir Launfal can not forget. The curtain falls on Sir Launfal awhile.

In the *Prelude to Part Two* we have a different scene. It is winter. A beautiful and complete description of a December day

is now given in contrast with the June day. A cold wind sweeps down from the upper mountain snows five thousand summers old. The brook builds him a home of ice in which to hide himself. The description of the winter palace of ice is one of the literary excellencies of the poem. The winter scene has no outpost of summer in the castle. It is winter everywhere. In the hall are song and laughter, and the merry light from the yule log fire; but the castle's cold walls and grim towers stand like sentinels at home in the presence of the winter's frost. Sir Launfal is a part of the winter scene. But the years have passed now, and it is winter in his life. After years of wandering he has come back. The long gray locks of Sir Launfal's hair furnish a harp upon which the wintry winds play and sing a cheerless song, and the refrain of it is, "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless." And this wanderer approaches the castle which was once his own, only to be ordered away by the stern voice of a steward whose scorn is as great as that Sir Launfal

had shown when he tossed the coin to the leper. And so all night he sat before the castle gate, his condition made more comfortless by the light from the hall fire as it flashed through the window slits of the old castle.

In *Part Two* we see Sir Launfal again going forth from the castle, not as a young knight in flashing armor, but an old man turned with scorn as a beggar from a door which once had been his own. *He is a different man now.* Formerly there was a cross blazoned on his coat of armor, a badge of his knighthood. Now another badge he wears, for deep in his soul he wears the sign of the suffering and the poor. But as he goes, behold! there is a leper crouching at the roadside begging an alms. What will Sir Launfal do now? We saw what he did when, as knight, he rode forth from that castle gate years ago. What will he do now? There is no loathing feeling now or creeping of the flesh in repulsion. Sir Launfal sees the leper, "lank as a rain-bleached bone;" but

he sees more. He has a new vision now. He sees in him an image of Him who died on the tree. He sees a divine element in the leper; they are brothers. Three persons are now in the group by the roadside: the leper, Sir Launfal, and the Christ; and there is a cord that binds the three in one, and they are brothers. Sir Launfal faces the Christ, and says:

> "Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
> Behold through him I give to Thee."

And not with scorn, but with brotherly love, he divides with the leper the last crust of bread, breaks the ice on the stream, and from a wooden bowl gives him to drink. And a light shines round the place. The leper seems transformed, and a voice softer than silence says, "Lo, it is I;" and then the voice declares that the Holy Grail for which he had sought in vain was found in the spirit of the act performed, not an alms tossed in scorn, but a brotherly deed done in the name of Christ, accompanied by the giving of self.

The words with which the Christ commends Sir Launfal have become immortal:

> "Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
> Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me."

So the vision closed. The Grail is discovered in vision, but the effect is real. Sir Launfal awakes, and the grim castle which had repelled summer is compelled to throw its gates wide open. Sir Launfal shares his earldom with his serfs, for they are brethren.

> "The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
> Has hall and bower at his command,
> And there 's no poor man in the North Countree
> But is Lord of the earldom as much as he."

But what is the meaning of all this? What would the poet teach? What philosophy and theology here are found? The vision is a parable; and as the parables of Jesus had their meaning, so this. Perhaps the meaning will be clearer by asking some preliminary questions. What is the Holy Grail? Who is Sir Launfal? What is the search in the philosophy of the poem?

What is the Holy Grail? Historically it was the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper; and this literal cup furnished an object of quest for the chivalry of the days of King Arthur. But evidently Lowell gives it a figurative application. In the poem before us it is not the cup for which Launfal seeks; it is something for which the cup stands. Evidently, from the contents of the poem, it is an ideal of life that is sought; a true ideal, as contrasted with the false. Let us call it the Christlike life; that ideal of right existence exhibited in the spirit of Christ. It is the spirit of Christ: it is the Christ Himself. It is a Christ life which is the ideal life. Call it the Christ if you will. Call it salvation. It is the same.

Who is Sir Launfal? Lowell himself gives a hint in the Author's Notes. He says there he has enlarged the circle of competition. He includes more than knights. Every man is included. Launfal is the idealization of the universal man. Every man is he; any man is he.

What is the search? In the light of what has been said the search appears as the attempt of the individual to rise above the natural base or inferior life and become possessed of the higher life, the ideal life; the saved life as it is exhibited in the life and spirit of Christ.

In the interpretation of this vision further we may differ somewhat from the usual interpretation. The usual interpretation is that it is an attempt to reveal the true idea of charity as contrasted with the false. The common idea of charity is to give an alms to the needy, perhaps with contempt, as Sir Launfal did at first. But the true idea is to give the self with the gift, as he did at last. For "the gift without the giver is bare." So the interpretation runs. This truth is certainly taught in the vision; but there is something more important which lies back of the theme of charity.

Again, others interpret the vision as exhibiting the idea of universal brotherhood. The conception of the divine element in man

furnishing a cord which binds all men as brothers is the theme some tell us. And again we will admit the truth; for the thought is prominent that the leper and knight were brothers to each other and to Christ. But again we must say that there is a theme that lies back of the brotherhood idea as well as the charity idea. The vision is a portrayal of the transformation of a life, and the idea of charity and brotherhood are prominent incidents to that transformation. But it is the *transformation* primarily that concerns us. In the vision it is not the process or method of transformation that is exhibited, but rather the fact and effect of transformation of life. In the fact and the effect the poet sees the method of social regeneration.

The fact of transformation is impressed in the striking contrasts of the story. In the first scene Sir Launfal is a picture of the natural (unregenerate) untransformed life. He has ambitions poorly founded. He would seek the Grail, not for any particular good,

but for a pastime and for the honor there might be in its discovery. Moreover, he is selfish and heartless. All nature is clothed in beauty, but his heart is not beautiful. When he sees a beggar he is disgusted and his flesh creeps. He does an act of external charity, but spoils it with the scorn of his heart. He is narrow and unsympathetic; as heartless and cold as the grim castle which has successfully resisted the sunshine and summer which have tried in vain to enter. The cold castle is itself a type of Sir Launfal's life. He has resisted the bright, wholesome influence which would transform his heart.

But look at Sir Launfal in the next scene, as he comes back an old man. The change in years is only a suggestion of the change in spirit. Sir Launfal is different within as well as without. No false ambitions sway him. He is humble. He has learned much. A new spirit possesses him. It is the spirit of love. Love for man and love for God. Whether Sir Launfal recognized it or not,

when he found that spirit of love and brotherhood he found the Grail. But he has the spirit now. He sees the leper not with scorn, but compassion. He is not content to toss a coin in scorn, but in love he divides his crust of bread and gives a cup of water in the Master's name. Mark you, it was unto the Master the deed was done—"through Him I give to thee." The divine element seen in Christ is likewise seen in the beggar, and to Christ in him (rather to Christ through him) he gives. Here is a different man; here is a life transformed, and the substance of the transformation is this, that the individual selfishness is lost in universal brotherliness and Christlikeness; and that is salvation.

As the poet here does not suggest the *process* by which this transformation occurs, we will leave that point untouched. Fill it in with your imagination or your theology, and let us pass on with the poet to the *effect* of the transformation. This effect is seen in two ways, in *character* and *conduct*.

In *character* Sir Launfal is different. He is humble, sympathetic, kind. More, he has a new conception of his relation to man and God. To the leper he says, "I behold in thee an image of Him who died on the tree." He could not say that before. Now he could see a brother and the Christ in a beggar. But in *conduct,* too, he is different. Now he gives himself in service, not a coin. A kind word is spoken, bread is given, need is relieved; a brother is served. And that this thought of service as a result of the transformed life is chief with the poet, is shown in the thought presented in closing—a description of the castle in the last verse. The gate stands open, summer is on, birds sing, the poor come and find a home there, and Sir Launfal makes his earldom to do service for needy brothers. Thus in the poet's idea the effect of the transformed life—the Christ life found, which is the Holy Grail—is a changed character, a new conduct, a blessed community, man a Christlike servant of his fellow-man.

The great mission of this poem from the practical standpoint is to emphasize the lesson that the true Christian life, or saved life, must express itself in service, and that brotherly service is a sacrament as pleasing to the Lord as partaking of the elements of His shed blood and broken body. And it is a lesson the world has needed sadly to learn, for it is one the world has ignored. As a matter of fact, the old conception of the effect of salvation was to gain heaven merely. Study "The Holy Grail" of Tennyson and you find that when Sir Galahad found the Holy Grail he was immediately translated into heaven by an escort of angels. That was the idea of the past, that one was saved to escape hell and reach heaven. But the idea of Lowell is different, and so with Christ. One is saved to become a servant of others; to be another Christ, by suffering and sympathy to enter the lives of others and bring them to a higher life. And this is the gospel of Christ. That man whose idea is to be saved merely to escape hell and reach

heaven has not learned the a-b-c of the Christian life. Nor has one reached the supreme evidence of salvation until he is possessed of a genuine desire to know God in serving men. The watchword of this age is, "Service to my brother." You who are failing here are missing the real essence of Christianity. The Church has its fields of labor for all; you may help bear her burdens and do her work; you may by your talents and money in a hundred ways serve men and honor God.

Let us give this parable a personal application. Heaven lies around us in our infancy; and not only so, but in manhood heavenly influences daily urge us to be our better selves, to seek the Christ life. You have felt them, brother. It was summer in your soul. The good mounted upward. But mayhap you followed the inspiration in a wrong way and thought the better life reached by some external act. Not so. The road to it is only through a transformed within. And that transformation comes only when one has

been willing to discard sin and selfishness and to lose himself individually in the general brotherhood of the race; when one really, by faith in God, sinks self in the sea of divinity which unites man with man and man with God. And when one has thus lost himself he suddenly finds himself in a large capacity; he has become a savior to the rest of the brotherhood and gives himself in daily service. And this is The Sacrament of the Christian life most worthy to exalt—daily service.

Carlyle once sat in a window overlooking the crowded streets of London and wrote, "There are four million people in London, mostly fools." There may have been some truth in his statement, but nearer the truth would it have been had he said, "Four million, mostly sufferers," for the city and country are full of people who are needy and hungry, not for bread, but for human love and sympathy. Let us look at a typical picture from real life.

A little fellow, four years old, was

brought from the slums to a Chicago orphans' home. When he was brought upstairs to be put in bed, had his bath, and the matron opened up the sweet little cot to put him between clean white sheets, he looked on in amazement. He said, "Do you want me to get in there?" "Yes." "What for?" "Why, you are going to sleep there." He was amazed beyond description. The idea of going to sleep in such a place as that—he did not know what to make of it. He had never slept in a bed in his life before; never.

He was put to bed, and the matron kissed him good-night—a little bit of a chap, only four years old; and he put up his hand and rubbed off the kiss. He said, "What did you do that for?" But the next morning he said, "Would you mind doing that again—what you did to me last night?" He had never been kissed before and did not know anything about it.

It was only about a week later, the matron said, that the little fellow would come around three or four times a day and look

up with a pleading expression in his face and say, "Would you love a fellow a little?"

After a few weeks a lady came to the home to get a child. She was looking for a boy; so the matron brought along the little chap, and the lady looked at him. She said, "Tommy, would n't you like to go home with me?" He looked right down at the floor. She said, "I will give you a hobby-horse and lots of playthings, and you will have a real nice time, and I will give you lots of nice things to do." He looked right straight at the floor—did not pay any attention to her at all. She kept talking, persuading him, and by and by the little fellow looked up into her face and said, "Would you love a fellow a little?" There is a tremendous pathos in that.

That is the yearning of the world, after all—for somebody who will love a fellow a little. And Christ has given the world its sublimest response to that yearning in the life of love which had its climax on Calvary. But the Christian is called to love a little, too.

And we find our Holy Grail; we possess our transformed lives in order that day by day we may partake of the sacrament of brotherly service. And this is the gospel of Christ. I am my brother's keeper. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. And He whose life has been epitomized in the statement that He went about doing good, said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

In Ralph Connor's book, "The Doctor," there is the character of a depraved gambler who is converted; his life is transformed. He hungers to reach others of his class, and finally one of the worst of his former companions comes to seek from him the better way. The converted gambler is poor at explanation; he can not tell the how, but he knows the fact. And so he simply puts a New Testament in the hands of his friend and tells him he can bank on that book. The rough mountaineer read the story and teaching of Christ, and one day the story got hold

of him and he pressed the book reverently to his lips and said, "I 'm agoin' to follow that trail." That is the trail for all to take —the trail of the life transformed through Christ, and which, transformed, seeks the transformation of another. For such service the world is dying; for such love the world is hungering. As followers of Christ, it is ours to love much and serve much. The Master has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

V

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON; OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S DEBT TO THE PAST

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON; OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S DEBT TO THE PAST

In his "Thanatopsis" W. C. Bryant declares that "all that tread the globe are but a handful to the tribes that slumber in its bosom;" the earth itself is "the great tomb of man." There is more than poetry in this declaration. The life of to-day is founded on the death of yesterday. The feet of the living tread the dust of the dead.

When we build our structures high in the air we first sink their foundations deep into the earth. We recognize the relation between the height and the depth because we can see it. It is tangible. But it is just as true, though not as easily recognized, that the immaterial structures of society to-day have

their foundations deep in the soil of yesterday. Do we boast of liberty? It is founded on the servitude and struggle of yesterday. Do we cry peace anon? It is conditioned on the war and blood of bygone days. Are we proud of the civilization of our land and age? It has come up, like the white-robed host, through great tribulation. It owes much to the toil and conflicts of the generations of the past. Do we talk freely of our Christianity and her worth to the world? Let us remember that her foundations go back to Gethsemane, where the sweat-drops issued in blood, and to Calvary, where the blood gathered in a stream which flowed for the healing and saving of the world. And let us remember that all through the years the structure has been enlarged by the blood and tears and struggles and sufferings of countless martyrs and saints. Christianity is largely indebted to the past. The Christian owes a vast debt to the past.

It is the debt of Christianity to the past that is suggested as one reads "The Prisoner

of Chillon," by Lord Byron. Had our fathers been made of less heroic stuff, when the horrors of persecution assailed them they might have played the coward and forsaken the principles which they held, and Christianity might have become a forgotten thing. But our fathers were heroes. They dared to suffer and die for a sacred cause. Their voices come ringing down the years heavy with heroic purpose. We are the sons and daughters of men who gave their bodies to the flames at the stake and sang triumphant songs while the flesh roasted; of men who at the rack had the life drawn out by painful degrees without a murmur; of men who submitted to the indignities and horrors of a dungeon life, long and cruel, and yet counted it all joy. These, our fathers, were not only heroes, but seers, and they were willing to suffer because they could see that through their suffering there would be transmitted to the generations of ages to come the gospel of a crucified Lord, which gospel guaranteed freedom from the curse of sin and sal-

vation to the joys of an eternal existence. The dead bodies of Egypt were preserved embalmed in linen folds with ointments of myrrh and cassia and chemicals. But the living gospel of Jesus has come down to us preserved in the pain of many martyrs and anointed with tears of much sorrow.

Lord Byron, the author of "The Prisoner of Chillon," is another of the great English poets for whose life we must apologize while we praise his work. When a boy he was, like Burns, unusual in his attachments to the opposite sex. From the ages of eight to eleven he had passionate affection for several girl idols. Had that early passion been properly restrained and directed, the later life of Byron might have been different. One can not read his life and of his parentage without feeling that this boy suffered from lack of parental influence. His father was a reckless profligate, who squandered his fortune at the gambling table. The home life was unhappy and resulted in a separation between the father and mother. It is said that even

after the separation the mother treated the son with alternate affection and violence. Evidently at an age when sorely in need of wise counsel and a directing hand, he was neglected. At any rate that early passion developed to a marked degree. Poor boy! He little knew of the volcanic fires slumbering deep in his nature, suggested by that abnormal attachment to the opposite sex. At this trait parents so often smile. God forbid! It is common for parents to wink at the foretokens of danger seen in their children's lives. Childish love affairs are considered cute and practices are encouraged that are hazardous to both refinement and morals. In the spirit of amusement parents encourage a dangerous familiarity between the sexes, and in a short time that familiarity grows to sensuality. It is playing with fire. Parents would be in better business if they would teach the children the spirit of chivalry instead of softness, until girls came to recognize the dignity and sacredness of their own position, and boys in the spirit of true

knighthood came to honor and defend the modesty and purity of girlhood.

When Byron grew to manhood and was writing some of his earlier poems he was delving into the immoralities and excesses of London society. A little later, in a spasmodic effort at reform, he married an attractive young woman and lived in marriage just one year. It was an unfortunate, miserable year for the bride, and at its end she, now a young mother, returned to her father's home and refused to live longer with Byron.

These domestic affairs set tongues wagging. Byron's virtues and vices were freely aired. Many accusations were made against him. Though guilty, he had some family pride left, and in those days of gossip said: "My name, which has been a knightly or noble one, since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that if what was whispered was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me." So he withdrew to Italy, where his life was still licentious,

and, as a biographer has said, "His genius was tainted by his indulgences." How brightly his star of genius might have shone we shall never know. It was obscured by sin. His own death was doubtless hastened by his wayward life, and he died at the age of thirty-six years—in the prime of life—but his manhood burned out. Just three months before his death he wrote a poem known as "Byron's Latest Verses," in which he described his own sad condition. Every young man on the road to license and sin should stop long enough to read these verses of Byron. They are the words of a man who has gone that way and learned what the end is. Let me quote these lines:

> My days are in the yellow leaf,
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone.

I know of no more dismal testimony in literature than that, "My days are in the yellow leaf"—it is fall time. What, fall of the year at thirty-six? Sin speeds at an awful

pace! "The flowers and fruits of love are gone." Ah, here is poverty indeed. The flowers of love in his own life withered. How barren must that life be that has not pure soil enough to grow one flower of love! The fruits, too, are missing! No love of child or wife or friend or home to cheer. No smile of God to bless. But wait. There is a heritage left, "The worm, the canker, and the grief." The worm, how it gnaws! The canker, how it eats! The grief, how it pains! But these, and these alone, are the heritage of a man who has traveled the way of license and sin. Ah, as we listen to this testimony of a ruined life we hear, too, the voice of Holy Writ saying, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof is death;" it is the way of sin.

"The Prisoner of Chillon" was written by Byron during his sojourn in Switzerland, after his separation from his wife and departure from England for the last time. The poem has an historic background. While the prisoner of the poem is a creation of Byron's

imagination, the prison is a reality. The prisoner, while imaginative, is yet a type of many who suffered for their faith, and the experiences through which he passed may be accepted as historically true in the lives of many noble martyrs. But the prison itself stood as described in the poem, and so stands to-day. It is located on the east shore of the famous Lake Geneva, called Leman by the Romans. The prison proper, or dungeon, is located in Chillon Castle, which is builded on a lonely rock near the east end of the lake, and is almost entirely surrounded by water. The castle and dungeon are exceedingly old, having been built centuries ago. The Geneva patriot Bonnivard, so the records show, was confined in this dungeon as early as 1530, but the dungeon itself dates back much further than that. From this confinement Byron got his idea of the Prisoner. The dungeon with its darkness, coldness, and loneliness stands in striking contrast with the beauty of the scenery about it, for Lake Geneva is noted for its beauty. For centuries the beau-

ties of this spot have been celebrated, and today a constant stream of beauty-lovers pours into Lake Geneva. From the lake the immortal Mont Blanc is plainly visible, though forty miles away; and its white, snow-capped summit is often seen reflected in the deeply blue waters of Lake Geneva.

Byron visited Switzerland and Geneva in 1816 and beheld the lonely dungeon, whose walls were washed by the waters of the beautiful lake. His imagination was aroused by what he beheld, and he wrote the now well-known poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon."

In the poem the Prisoner is spokesman. He tells his own story and makes his own horrible description of suffering. He begins abruptly:

> "My hair is white, but not with years,
> Nor grew it white
> In a single night
> As men's have grown with sudden years,"

and thus the poet psychologically prepares the reader for a story of unusual interest.

Hair whitened, not with years nor with fears! What, then, is the cause? The mind is thrown into a state of expectancy. The question of the aroused mind is answered a little further on, when the poet makes the prisoner say, "But this was for my father's faith I suffered chains and courted death." Now we have it. Here is to be the story of one who suffered for the faith of his fathers and for loyalty to his father's God. So the story begins.

The father of the Prisoner perished at the stake for the faith he would not forsake. Six sons were left, and of these all but one, the Prisoner himself, had finally followed the father to a martyr's grave. The sublime spirit of the martyr is suggested in the description of the manner in which these sons met their death, namely, "Proud of persecution's rage."

We are made to think here of Polycarp, who welcomed death at the stake, crying: "Six and eighty years have I served Christ, and He never wronged me. How can I now

forsake Him, my King and Savior?" and of Hugh Latimer, who shook hands with the flames as they leaped up to lick out his life's blood, and shouted to a fellow martyr through the heat, "Be of good cheer, Ridley; we shall this day light such a fire in England as shall never be put out." The spirit of the martyr, "proud of persecution's rage," is a blessed heritage for the Christian of to-day, and should inspire courage and loyalty in the service of the world's Savior.

The Prisoner proceeds to tell how the sons met their death: "One in fire and two in field." This left three, of whom the Prisoner was one. With the three we are concerned in the story. These three were cast into the dungeon of Chillon for their faith in "the God their foes denied."

The description of the dungeon is given so vividly we are able to reproduce it in our thought. It is dark, for its walls are tight; only one opening, high and small, admitting one lonely ray of light, which, as the poet

says, is like a "sunbeam which has lost its way." It is damp. The prison floor is below the level of the lake, and sometimes, when the waves dash high, the spray is flung through that narrow opening in the wall to keep company with the sunbeam which has lost its way. It is bare. No wood or stone forms the floor; but the cold, bare earth without a blade of grass forms the resting-place of the captive feet. "In Chillon's dungeon deep and old" are seven pillars of stone, to which are attached seven rings, and to the rings seven chains. A capacity for seven the dungeon thus possessed, yet the three brothers were the only victims confined therein. Each was chained to his stone column, and the chain was so short no pace could they take, nor touch each other's hand. So dark was it they could not see each other's face. They were three, yet each alone. And yet the one consolation remained of being able to speak each to each through the darkness.

The Prisoner of Chillon was the eldest of the three brothers, and so he endeavored to

become comforter to the others. As they talked their voices seemed to change from day to day, until, their naturalness gone, they sounded like the echoes of the dungeon stone. As the weary weeks wore away the second brother in years pined away and died. When the Prisoner, by the silence, became conscious his brother was dead, in a frenzy he attempted to break the chains that bound him and rush to the brother's side; but all in vain. Then came the cruel keepers to bury the dead. Right where the body had fallen they digged the grave, and although the Prisoner pleaded that his brother might rest in a grave upon which the sun could shine, there in the dark dungeon they buried him. And the Prisoner dwelt in the presence of two brothers: one dead, one living.

But the youngest brother was soon to meet the fate of the second, and he too was struck with death, and the Prisoner saw or rather felt him withering away until all was still. The Prisoner expresses his feelings at that time in these memorable words:

"O God, it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood;
I 've seen it rushing forth in blood;
I 've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swollen, convulsive motion;
I 've seen the sick and ghostly bed
Of sin, delirious with its dead;
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmixed with such,—but sure and slow."

It is at this point in the story the genius of the poet reaches its climax. With a touch of art which is true to life the poet invests the Prisoner with supernatural power as he labors under the stress of this second death, and with a Herculean effort he breaks the chain which binds him to his pillar and rushes through the darkness to the pillar where the youngest brother has stood. His own words are, "With one strong bound I rushed to him; I found him not." "I only stirred in this black spot."

"I found him not." What pathos, and yet what religious philosophy in the words. The Prisoner found the cold form. He says

he took the hand that lay so still, yet he found him not. It is a statement akin to that of the Savior, who, as He stood over the lifeless form of the damsel, said, "She is not dead." She, the spirit, was living and immortal, though the body was cold. In the dungeon of Chillon he was not to be found, though the body was there. The soul was gone. He was absent. Have you never experienced the pathos, the philosophy of this when you have bended with tear-dimmed eyes over the cold form of one you loved, and laid your hand upon those icy hands or pressed your lips upon the brow as white and cold as marble? You found her not. You found him not. The spirit was gone. And yet, if you had the vision of Jesus, and understood the immortality of spirit, you could say, "Not dead, not dead."

Alone with the lifeless forms of his brothers, one above ground and one beneath, the Prisoner is pressed with more than human strength can endure. His usual faculties fail him. He sinks into a dazed or semi-conscious

state. Grief and suffering have unmanned the man, and he falls into a state of mental stupor, of deadly torpor. He says:

> "I had no thought, no feeling,—none,
> Among the stones I stood a stone."

Shakespeare has been praised for his skill in portraying truthfully psychological moments and laws in dealing with difficult situations. The skill of Byron at the point just described is worthy of comparison with Shakespeare. Notice the situation. A living man has become a stone; dead to the world without, to ambition, to hope. Only one thing remains to indicate life, and that is his faith in the God of his fathers. Otherwise he is dead. The task of the poet is to perform a psychological resurrection. How shall it be done? How shall a stone be made to feel? Would the Prisoner be aroused by the rushing of the angry waves of Geneva against the wall of the castle with such force that the walls were made to rock? Not so; for when the walls had trembled he was un-

moved and said, "I could have smiled to see the death that would have set me free." Would he have been frightened into consciousness again by the rushing in of keepers with drawn swords to take his life? No; but unmoved he would have met the thrust that would have ended forever his consciousness of things mundane. How, then, shall he be brought back to life? Listen! There is silence like death reigning in the dungeon shadows. It is the abode of death. But suddenly a strange sound strikes its way through the awful stillness. Strikes its way? No; for it brings no shock or pain. Rather it descends like a heaven-sent psalm and lays its soothing melody against the Prisoner's ear and sinks into the Prisoner's heart. It is the carol of a bird. How strange it seemed in that sad place, where liberty-blessed life had never volunteered to come before, and sound of music had never before been heard! The carol of a bird! Only one brief note, and then it ceased; but the Prisoner's heart had been reached. And then the carol came

again. To the Prisoner it became "the sweetest song ear ever heard." The Prisoner's heart was not only touched, but stirred. Tears started, and his "eyes ran over with the glad surprise." Slowly and by degrees his consciousness returned. The stone began to feel. The Prisoner lived again. And then in the only crevice in the wall the Prisoner saw the bird, with azure wings, and listened as it sang to him a song which spake a thousand things. But underneath and above all else which the song said was its utterance of love. This it was that touched the Prisoner's heart. "And it was come to love me when none lived to love me so again," says he. Love! What a picture is here! And what a message the bird sings to the world! Music is power, it is said. It hath charm to sooth and power to arouse. But love is power too. And what power there is when love's message is borne on the wings of music! Love hath power to arouse. When ambition has been broken and hope is dead and the life is like a stone, let the music of love be sung—

and how the heart takes hope again! And if love of a bird can arouse the despairing Prisoner of Chillon, how much more may the love of man for his brother arouse to life anew! "Let brotherly love continue," says the sacred writer. (Heb. 13:1.) Sing your love to the struggling brother. Many a victory has been achieved because somebody whispered in the ear of the toiler, "I love you." Many a failure has been avoided because love spake its message, and failure became out of the question. O bird, sing thy song of love and rouse the Prisoner's heart! O man, speak thy word of love and cheer thy struggling brother!

The change affected by the carol of the bird was a complete one. The bird flew away, but its mission was accomplished. The man was awakened. Even the keepers became kind. The prisoner's broken chain remained broken. He had the liberty of the cell. He made a footing in the wall and once looked out of the crevice through which the bird had sung its song. He saw the mountains snow-

crowned, the lake beneath, the blue Rhone flowing away in the distance, the sails, the town far away. One look. The eyes filled with tears, and he sank again into the dungeon abode as one sinks into a new-made grave.

Time wore away, and at last—how long, the Prisoner never knew—men came to set him free. Just here we meet a pathetic situation. Liberty was no boon to the Prisoner. He says of himself that he had "learned to love despair." All his tribe were dead. His spirit was crushed. Nothing had life and liberty to give to him, and he says, "Even I regained my freedom with a sigh."

There are two practical messages contained in this closing pathetic scene. The first is the danger of crushing the free, noble spirit of manhood by cruel oppression. No prouder spirit existed than that which the Prisoner as a freeman possessed. Brave was he, and ambitious. But behold him at the last, a man unmanned, who enters freedom with a sigh! What a plea is herein made for justice

and kindness in dealing with our fellow-man! Oppression in all its forms has been to the world a dear economy. It has meant the suppression of manhood and the curbing of the ambitious spirit, and manhood and ambition have been the very things the world has needed for her enrichment. Behold "The Man With the Hoe." He is painted on canvas. Yes; but he lives in the world about us. A man unmanned is he, suffering the toil of the beast without the privileges of a man. He is a monument to society's unjust oppression. He has been taught by oppression to love despair. But man should be a lover of liberty, a devotee of ambition, an apostle of hope. Every lover of manhood and liberty should be a foe of oppression, whether it be social, political, or even religious.

The second message is the reaction of man's environment on himself. The atmosphere in which one lives, the companions of the daily walk, will gradually make their stamp upon the life. The evil and base accepted, will destroy the taste for better

things. Herein we face again the effect of sin on human life. We are almost shocked when in the closing lines of this poem we hear the Prisoner say that he had friendship made with spiders and with mice, and with them had learned to dwell in quiet. Shocked, and yet why should he be? There is wholesome warning, too, in these words, which should be proverbial with all lovers of truth couched in verse: "My very chains and I grew friends. So much a long communion tends to make us what we are."

Behold, the Prisoner of Chillon a friend of chains and spiders and mice! And yet he was a man. How are the mighty fallen! The treacherous, creeping, enslaving things have been his companions, and he has come down to their level. Such, too, is the work of sin. There are spiders, mice, and chains abundant yet. The doors of the dungeon of sin swing wide, and all who will may enter there. But let him who enters beware. The motto of Dante is over that door, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." All hope aban-

don while you remain here; for gradually, as one becomes familiar with the creeping and enslaving elements of sin, his high ideals vanish, his manhood dies, he sinks, and becomes content with spiders, mice, and chains. The closing words from the Prisoner's lips speak a truth akin to that of Sacred Writ, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Thus the Prisoner of Chillon stands to us not only as a type of those who by faithful suffering have made Christianity indebted to them, and made possible the Christian heritage we enjoy to-day, but stands also as a witness testifying to the danger of tyrannical oppression and to the dire result of the work of sin in a life which submits to its fellowship. Prison cells of stone have inclosed the devotees of Christianity in the past. Prison cells of sin would enslave the heirs of Christianity to-day. He who dwells within the prison cell must bear upon his manhood the

marks of the prison life. He will become content with spiders, mice, and chains.

> "So much a long communion tends
> To make us what we are."

But he who lives in the pure atmosphere of liberty seeks better things and grows to a manhood gradually molded into the likeness of God.

VI

THE ANCIENT MARINER;
OR,
THE NEARNESS OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

THE ANCIENT MARINER; OR, THE NEARNESS OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

Harriet Beecher Stowe, in expressing poetically her conception of heaven, says:

"It lies around us like a cloud,—
A world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.
Its gentle breezes fan our cheeks;
Amid our worldly cares
Its gentle voices whisper love,
And mingle with our prayers."

The nearness of the spirit world as expressed in these verses is the faith of many people whose thought has a spiritual trend and whose souls are susceptible to spiritual impressions. Nor is this faith discredited by

either religion or philosophy. If it is true, as Holy Writ declares, that in the midst of life we are in death, it is likewise true that in the midst of material things we are in the presence of spiritual things. While we live in the material world we live in the spiritual world. The spiritual realm broods over us like sunlight. It presses in upon us like the atmosphere. Its tides come rolling into our lives like sea tides forcing their way into every inlet along the shore line. Our world of matter is only a little island resting like a speck on the bosom of the boundless sea of spirit.

This idea of the close relation of the seen and the unseen was one held in the thought of Coleridge. He was at once a theologian and philosopher, as well as poet. He found nothing inconsistent with either theology or philosophy in this view of the relation of the material and spiritual realms. He felt that, while man lived in the visible world, there were yet influences and forces that made excursions from the invisible world

into the visible. There was an interweaving and overlapping of the two realms, and an interplay of forces from one to the other. It is this sort of a belief that underlies the tale of the Ancient Mariner. This is not saying that "the Ancient Mariner" was written to express this philosophy, for it was not; but it is to say that this philosophy is naturally expressed in and colors the story of "the Ancient Mariner." How much it colors the story will be seen as we proceed.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a type of the clean man of letters. The claim is not made that he was a saint or that he had no defects. He was human. But he was a man of letters from whose life were absent those glaring defects and sins which stained such lives as Byron, Burns, and Shelley. We read something of his being addicted to the use of opium; but this was his misfortune rather than his sin. Opium was first administered as a relief for pain caused by rheumatism, and it fastened its deadly appetite upon him. Nevertheless Coleridge made an

heroic fight against it, and in some degree, at least, mastered the evil.

He was a splendid type of the intellectual genius and man of culture. As a boy he was a careful student and omnivorous reader. When but fifteen years of age he dared to launch boldly into the field of metaphysics. He developed a taste for philosophy and theology that endured to the end of his life. His writings on these subjects stamped the thought of his age, and to-day are of vast benefit to those who would work out a philosophy of life upon which may be safely built a rational system of Christian faith.

Coleridge was in his earlier life a victim of the popular thought of his age, which was materialistic and pantheistic. Hence we find him in his intellectual history passing through materialism and pantheism to find at last a firm resting-place in Christian theism. In his philosophic reasoning he was aided by his study of Kant, and adopted some of the fundamental tenets of that great thinker. He, with Kant, accepted that funda-

mental distinction which all Christian thinkers must posit as a starting-point, namely, that there is a difference between matter and mind, between nature and spirit, between the world and God. The mind is not a mode of matter, as materialism would suggest. Spirit is not a phase of nature, as pantheism would imply; but these are different and distinct. Their essential difference is seen when we remember, as Coleridge taught, that the constituent element of spirit is freedom, but the constituent element of nature is necessity. Matter is held in the grip of necessity —mind is free. Coleridge posited God as the Creator. Nature and man were objects created. Starting with this distinction, he built his Christian philosophy.

His philosophy led him to theology. He even became a preacher and contemplated taking up the work of the regular ministry. William Hazlitt, having heard Coleridge preach on one occasion, said: "Poetry and Philosophy have met together. Truth and Genius have embraced under the eye and

sanction of Religion." That description reveals something of the power of Coleridge as a preacher. However, his plans for the ministry were never carried out.

There was a distinct poetic side to the nature of Coleridge, which was greatly stimulated by his close association with such men as Wordsworth, Southey, and Charles Lamb. Wordsworth especially had a salutary effect on his poetic work. It was in union with Wordsworth that "the Ancient Mariner," with which we are now concerned, was produced. Wordsworth gives an interesting account of the genesis of the poem. He says that in the fall of 1797, while walking with his sister and with Coleridge to visit Lenton and the Valley of Rocks, they planned the poem of "the Ancient Mariner," which was founded on a dream of a friend of Coleridge. The larger part was original with Coleridge, but certain parts were molded by suggestions from Wordsworth. He suggested some crime to be committed by the Mariner which should bring upon him spectral punishment. He

had read of the albatrosses in the South Seas, and proposed to Coleridge that the crime of the Mariner be the killing of one of those birds. Coleridge accepted the suggestion and, in harmony with it, worked out the strange tale of "the Ancient Mariner."

A hasty review of the tale will be necessary to an understanding of the poem and its suggested teachings.

The tale opens with the appearance of an old seaman of mystical bearing, who hails a wedding guest as the latter proceeds toward the banquet hall. The wedding guest, attracted by the strange appearance and the words of the Mariner, sits down on a stone and, forgetting all about the wedding, listens long and patiently to the tale of the Mariner. The Mariner tells the story of a weird voyage. The vessel cleared the harbor and sailed southward into regions of ice and snow. Alone in the cold, and surrounded by fog, the vessel was approached by a sea bird known as the albatross. The albatross is frequently seen in those southern seas. It

is a bird of great size, extending the wings in some instances a distance of twelve or thirteen feet. It is considered by sailors a bird of good omen, and therefore a prophecy of bad luck when one is killed or injured. But in this instance, for some reason, the Mariner shot the albatross with his crossbow.

After the killing of the bird the fog lifted, and the other sailors justified the act of the Mariner by saying he killed the bird that had caused the fog. They thus placed themselves in the position of accomplices in the killing. The fair wind blew, and they proceeded on their way, sailing finally northward into a silent sea unreached by man before. Then began the misfortune of the sailors. A deadly calm came on. The ship became motionless. The sun was hot. The ship's boards shrank with the heat. The sailors suffered with thirst. "Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink." The sea itself seemed stagnant. "Slimy things did crawl with legs upon the slimy sea." In

these dire circumstances the attitude of the Mariner's companions changed. They looked upon him as the cause of their misfortunes, and so placed about his neck the dead albatross as sign of his crime.

Then a strange thing happened. A shape like a sail approached from the west, moving from the setting sun. It moved without breeze or tide, a spectral ship. As the ship drew near a spectral woman was seen on board with her mate called Death. The two were casting dice, and as the strange ship glided past, the Mariner heard the woman cry: "The game is done! I 've won; I 've won." The woman's name was "The Nightmare Life-in-Death." The winning of the game by Life-in-Death over Death himself was a prophecy of the coming experience of the Mariner, who, in the midst of a dead, slimy sea, and dead companions lying all about, should be compelled to live, a fearful life in the midst of death.

The prophecy was soon fulfilled. One by

one the sailor companions, as smitten by a sudden malady, fell down, each turning on the Mariner an eye that seemed to flash a curse, and the vessel's deck was strewn with the corpses of four times forty men. For seven days and seven nights the Mariner sat alone in the presence of the dead, enduring the curse of their glassy eyes. The only living objects in sight were the water snakes and slimy things that swam or crept over the stagnant sea. And yet those creatures in their horribleness seemed beautiful to the Mariner because they possessed life, and he blessed them unaware. Then an unlooked-for thing happened in his inner experience. The moment he blessed the creatures of the sea he could pray. The albatross fell from his neck; the awful spell that had haunted and cursed him was broken.

Here is a feature worth noting. When the Mariner blessed he could pray. There is a relation between blessing and praying. He prays best who blesses most. He whose life is given to cursings instead of blessings

can pray little. We reach God best in prayer after we have reached man most in blessing. As Coleridge says in this same poem:

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

The spell was broken. Sleep came to the weary Mariner. Rain from heaven began to fall on the dry vessel and dead sea. The wind arose. The calm was ended. The dead sailors caught the new inspiration, and rose and began to work the ropes and to man the ship. They had not returned to life, but a troop of spirits from the unseen world had come and taken possession of those bodies; dead men were doing the work of living men. Under their touch the vessel made a sudden bound and began to move. The Mariner fell into a swoon. In his unconscious state he seemed to hear two voices in the air. One was the voice of a spirit from the region of

the albatross' home, and he spake in tones of condemnation as he said:

> "Is this the man?
> With his cruel bow he laid full low
> The harmless albatross."

The other was a pleading voice, which said, "The man hath penance done, and penance more will do."

The ship moved on, carried not so much now by the wind as by the power of the spirits in control. While the Mariner was in his trance the ship moved at a fearful rate; but when he awoke the speed slackened. But the boat was still manned by dead men. They fixed on the Mariner their stony eyes. But the curse was broken. Swiftly the ship sailed on, and at last the Mariner caught a glimpse of the lighthouse in the harbor from which he first had sailed, and approached again his own country, feasting his eyes on his native shore.

As the ship slipped silently into the bay, flooded with moonlight, the Mariner turned

from his scanning of the shore of his native land to look upon the strange crew. An appalling sight met his eye. Each body again lay upon the deck lifeless and flat. But on every corpse there stood a spirit form. Each stood as a lovely light, and together they formed a seraph-band and moved their hands as signals toward the land. Soon a boat appeared. A Pilot and the Pilot's boy accompanied the Hermit who rode therein. As the boat approached a sound was heard rumbling beneath the waves. It reached the ship and split the bay. The ship on which the Mariner rode went down like lead. The Mariner found himself afloat upon the water, but swiftly was drawn within the Pilot's boat. Safely he was landed on the shore, and from him the Hermit demanded what manner of man he was. In answer the Mariner told the tale of his strange experience. Its recital brought him relief. Henceforth he found his only relief in passing like the night from land to land, seeking for those who would hear the tale. The moment he saw

his face he knew the man who would listen to his tale. And so he had found the wedding guest, and to him the tale was told. The Mariner closed his story with the wholesome declaration already quoted:

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

It would be difficult to find any place in literature a tale more weird or more strange than that of this Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is a tale in which impossible situations are described with all the candor of the ordinary, and supernatural beings and experiences are introduced as naturally as though they were common-place. One comes from the reading of the poem with a sort of creepy feeling and finds his mind pressing the questions, Why did the poet write such a tale? and What does he mean by the unreasonable narrative? These are questions difficult to answer. We are accus-

tomed to treat poems much as parables and look back of their content to the deeper meaning their author would express. And most poems lend themselves to this sort of interpretation. There is a philosophy of life, some religious faith, or practical lesson presented by them. But "the Ancient Mariner" is not a vehicle conveying to us any stated faith or philosophy which the author would exhibit. Its parabolic worth lies rather in a suggestion than a definite message. It is suggestive of the relation between the world that is seen and the world unseen; of man in his relation to the world of matter and the world of spirits. Mrs. Oliphant in her "Literary History of England" well expresses the idea when she says that "the Ancient Mariner" is "a parable not only of a ship and albatross, but of mankind; a stranger on earth, moving about in worlds unrealized, always subject to be seized upon by powers unknown, to which he is kin, though he understands them not." In that statement Mrs. Oliphant has gone farther

than most critics go, and as far as any one may dare go; for it is only in a suggestive sense that the poem may be considered a parable at all. It is rather a play of the poet's imagination, with little regard to teaching or moralizing. But as imagination usually has a connection with one's thoughts and beliefs, we may find even in this poetic play of the imagination a suggestion of Coleridge's mental color, or faith, and this Mrs. Oliphant has discovered, rightly, to be the belief in the intermingling of the seen and unseen worlds. "The Ancient Mariner" is hardly a parable setting forth that intermingling; it is rather a freak of the imagination in which that intermingling is discovered as being unintentionally expressive of the author's conviction that such an intermingling exists.

It would hardly be true, therefore, to say that Coleridge in "the Ancient Mariner" is attempting to offer any definite philosophy of life or to teach any specific message: moral, religious, or otherwise. Perhaps as

much as the poet intended to do was to suggest the mystery with which life is always enveloped. "The Ancient Mariner" is a story of mystery. It impresses the strange nearness of the spiritual and material realms —the mystic interweaving of the seen and the unseen. It is this strange overlapping of the seen and the unseen that constitutes the force of the poem. You feel it at the start in the appearance of the Mariner with his long beard, piercing eyes, and strange attire. It sounds in the first words he utters, "There was a ship." Here is mystery suggested at once. The mind portrays a lone sail on a measureless sea; and the sea is ever a suggestion of mystery and a prophecy of a world unseen. If ever a skeptic is made to believe in the overshadowing presence of an unseen and mightier world than the one we know so well, it is when he stands on the shore of the sea and watches the tides roll in with a force that mocks human notions of strength, and then sees those mighty tides ebb away into a distance

so silent and so vast that eternity is suggested not as an impossible fiction, but an essential fact. The very sea, with its resources unknown and its limits unseen, is an argument for an unseen and unknown world encircling that little island we call the life of man. And so, when the Mariner says, "There was a ship," little wonder the wedding guest stopped. He had heard a suggestion of the unseen that borders the sea; and the unseen is a theme man is ever hungering for. That the unseen world is about us, is the contention of Coleridge. That our lives are affected by influences that come to us out of the unseen world, he believes. That strangely out of the unseen spectral ships come sailing across our lives, and vanish, he implies. These are the underlying suggestions of "the Ancient Mariner."

But as in all mysteries some matters are clear, so in "the Ancient Mariner" there are some truths very evident. Whether the poet placed them there intentionally or unintentionally, they are there. They are

truths true to human experience. They are truths that appear in the gospel of Jesus as fundamental principles. Three of them we note.

First. Transgression is the cause of misfortune. Sin breeds calamity. In "the Ancient Mariner" the seas were calm and the voyage happy until the Mariner committed the sin of slaying the innocent albatross. Then, like a flood, misfortunes swept down upon him until it seemed he was the special mark of heaven's wrath. Here the poet has become an unconscious preacher, for he has laid strong emphasis upon the gospel truth that the way of the transgressor is hard. Many a man has found his sea calm and his sky bright until a sin came. Then came the storm, and perhaps the final wreck. If men would not sin so, men would not suffer so. It is the first sin of the life that is the big sin, for that is the one that throws open the door of the life for the incoming of many ills. Well might the Mariner wring his hands and cry, "If I had not shot the alba-

tross with my crossbow!" Well might many a sin-tossed life to-day cry: "If I had not—if I had not committed my first theft; if I had not told my first falsehood; if I had not taken my first drink of liquor; if I had not killed the albatross!" Over every voyager the white-winged albatross soars. Every voyager is equipped with the deadly bow and hath the power to shoot. But woe to him who speeds that fatal shaft. That shaft will come back home to quiver in the archer's heart.

Second. Penitence brings to the transgressor respite and peace. The Mariner tried to pray. The prayer failed. The heart was dry as dust. Then he did that which was next to prayer, aye, was prayer—he blessed the creatures of the sea. And when his benediction fell, then he could pray. Many a man fails in prayer because his heart is dry with hate and selfishness. In his ministry he has never blessed another life. We can pray well only when we have blessed much. When the Mariner blessed, lo! he

could pray. The albatross, the mark of his sin, fell from his neck and dropped into the sea. The spell was broken. A new era dawned. The ship moved. The lifeless bodies of the crew were possessed of new energy and, rising, took their places, pulling ropes and guiding the craft on which a praying man was riding. Dead men pulling ropes! What does that mean? Heavenly aid has come to the man who prayed. Again the poet has become a preacher. He is illustrating the gospel of the Christ, who says that the Father in heaven "shall give His angels charge concerning thee." Dead men pulling ropes! Perhaps there is more of this playing of another world on our world than we think. Perhaps when prayer has put the life of man in touch with the life of God there is more of divine aid than we realize. Many a human craft is aided on its course by influences from an unseen source. Spiritual forces at the behest of prayer come into our lives to man the ropes and speed the sails to make our voyage swift and safe.

Third. The life of prayer will come to safe harbor at last. The Mariner prayed. His vessel moved with new vigor. Spirits from an unseen world helped him on the way. Not seaward, but homeward, his vessel sped. The shores of the homeland came in view. The harbor was reached. The old storm-beaten vessel, for which the Mariner had no further use, sank, a wreck, into the sea. But the Mariner was saved from the wreck, caught up in the Pilot's boat, and soon placed his feet on native soil. Home at last! The journey ended; dangers past. Safe home at last.

Poet, thou art preacher once more. The Mariner has landed, by the Pilot's aid. And as they tread the shore of the homeland we hear the voice of the soul's Pilot saying, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also." And again we hear the echo of His voice, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Safe home at last!

Whatever may have been the thought of

the author, we may be justified in looking at the tale of "the Ancient Mariner" as a suggestive parable of the soul. Like all parables, it must not be pressed too far, but it has its lesson. The soul, like the Mariner, moves out upon its voyage over a strange sea called Life. It journeys safe and well until it meets the experience of sin. It slays its albatross. Then, lo! the whole aspect of the voyage changes; for sin ever works experiences of horror and ruin in man's life. The voyage itself becomes aimless and the sea dead. But respite and new hope come by persistency and prayer. Then the divine influences are sent from God to aid erring man. "He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever." And finally, moved by prayer and guided by the Comforter's presence, the soul comes back to the harbor from which it sailed, and finds a landing-place safely in the presence of the God who gave it birth.

The message of "the Ancient Mariner" speaks this word, Avoid sin. And yet, if

thou hast sinned, pray. In penitence cry for rescue. Heaven will hear. Heavenly help will come. The Pilot will appear. The voyage will yet be safe, the landing sure. Every man may, if he will, breathe the faith of the poet Tennyson,—

"For tho' from out our bourn of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

VII

SNOW-BOUND;
OR,
CHARACTER FORMED AT THE FIRESIDE

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"The Snow-Bound" of John Greenleaf Whittier may be called a poem cosmopolitan. It has no merely local attachments; it appeals to no single share of life or class of people. Its appeal is to the universal man. It has a voice for every phase of life and every condition of heart. To sit in silent communion with "Snow-Bound" for one hour is to listen for an hour to an oracle, as with a power almost divine it speaks messages suited to every taste and need of the life. The lover of nature here finds such vivid portrayals of nature's scenes that he feels his own heart beating in harmony with nature's heart. Lovers of home life find

here pictures which make the blood run swiftly and cause tears to start to the eyes. Those who mourn for loved ones lost feel here the pathos of another life that has laid loved forms away "beneath the low green tent whose curtain never outward swings." The wandering life that owes to parents righteous and serious its redemption from worldliness and frivolity, finds herein a new glimpse of the influence of godly fathers and mothers in the lives of children. The lover of liberty finds here patriotic speech that fans to a new heat his love for the land of the free. The educator who finds the future safety and usefulness of our land to be conditioned on the education of the masses, catches a new inspiration as he reads here of "a schoolhouse plant on every hill, stretching in radiate nerve lines thence the quick wires of intelligence." And the Christian saint finds new comfort here as he reads of a faith in an immortal existence and a future meeting of loved ones expressed in the sentiment "that Life is ever lord of death,

and Love can never lose its own. For Love will dream and Faith will trust that somehow, somewhere meet we must."

Whittier occupies in one respect a somewhat unique position among men of letters. He is more a man of the soil than a man of the schools. In this respect he differs from such poets as Coleridge and Browning, who were men bearing the scholastic stamp. They were to some degree, at least, the product of the schools. They received classic and artistic training; they fed their minds on profound systems of thought. Coleridge was early a student of metaphysics, and his mind was ever of the rugged and profound type that takes to philosophy and theology. Browning early became a student of Greek and of the classics. He was polished by culture, could paint, and perform on the piano; was considerable of a sculptor; a polished, artistic gentleman. Whittier was a farmer boy. His home was a humble one. It is said that "genius delights to cradle its offspring by the fireside of the poor." It was so with

Whittier. His education was that of the humble farmer's boy of the early days. Books in his home were few. The principal books with which he became acquainted as a boy were the Bible and the poems of Burns. These he studied diligently. He attended the common schools; but he never became a college man. He was the only one of the famous group of New England poets of his time who was not college-bred.

Whittier was in large part a product of nature and the home. He loved nature. He rested beneath the shade of the trees; he lay down among the wild flowers; he listened to the song of birds and the murmur of the brook, of which he says: "The music of whose liquid lips became to us companionship, and in our lonely life had grown to have an almost human tone."

In later years Whittier continued his self-education, for he was ever a student. He was a great reader. He became a newspaper man and was somewhat interested in politics. He finally became an ardent supporter of the

cause of liberty for the slaves, and much of his poetry was written in the interest of the beloved black man and may be called patriotic poetry. But meanwhile his inclination to poetry was with him whatever his vocation in life, and in that poetry he revealed continually the effects of his early training. Traces of the Bible and Burns appear frequently in his works. It may be worth while in passing to call attention to the indelible stamp made on one's life by his early reading. For this reason parents should see to it that the reading of the children is of the proper sort. And since the Bible has played such an important part in the early education of so many of our greatest writers and orators, it would be well for the parent today to ask if it is not a serious mistake to neglect the use of the Bible in the home where children are growing. Knowledge of the Bible is essential to a liberal education; neglect of it in the home is almost a crime. If not taught something of the Bible in the home, many children will go through life pa-

rading their ignorance of it, for they will never learn it elsewhere.

"Snow-Bound" is a description of Whittier's own home during the period the family was housed up by the raging of a New England snowstorm. It is a beautiful, tender home scene, with generous descriptions of the forms and faces at the fireside. "Snow-Bound" has been called the American companion piece to "The Cotter's Saturday Night," by Robert Burns. While both are home scenes, there is a striking difference between them. In "The Cotter's Saturday Night" the prevailing characteristic is the religious spirit of the home. The climax is reached when the father spreads the open Bible on his knees and says, "Let us worship God." The theme there is God at the fireside.

"Snow-Bound," however, is different. No prayer is mentioned here. We are not to conclude from its omission that there was no prayer in Whittier's home, for that would be a wrong conclusion. His was a Quaker home. The Bible was there. Prayer was

there. There is in "Snow-Bound" a hint of the prayerful spirit when the mother is represented as pausing a moment just before going to bed to express her thankfulness for food and shelter from the storm, and her hope that none might lack, that fearful night, for bread and clothing and warmth; but no family prayer is pictured. It was not in the purpose of the poet to dwell so much upon the religious spirit of the home, which is taken for granted, as upon the social spirit of the home. His aim is to present the forms and faces, the splendid social communion enjoyed, and suggest the influence of those lives and that home spirit in molding the character and destiny of those who were beneath that roof; for verily the home is the mightiest force under heaven for the forming of character. It is there the impressions are made that will color the life. It is there the start is made which determines largely the direction of life.

The voice of God once spake to Moses as he stood before Mount Hebron and said,

"The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." As we come up to this Whittier home, half buried in the drift of snow, and are about to enter to behold the scenes within and listen to those voices hushed long ago, a sense of awe oppresses and we almost hear a voice saying, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Let us be very quiet now. We are about to lift the curtain that veils a sacred precinct. We are to look into a home—a home with the world shut out; with the inner trust and fellowship and love. This is holy ground.

A storm has raged for two nights and two days. The scene described in the poem is laid in the third night, after the storm had passed and paths or tunnels through the snow had been made. The description of that storm is so vivid one can see the picture and appreciate the words of the poet when he says on the second morning:

> "We looked upon a world unknown
> On nothing we could call our own—
> No cloud above, no earth below
> A universe of sky and snow."

However, we will not stop to notice the description of the storm, magnificent as it is, but will enter the snow-bound home and look upon the scenes therein.

It is an old-fashioned country home, with the cheerful fireplace, its light making the room burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom; the oaken log and stout back-stick and old andirons; the house dog with paws outspread toward the flame; the cat, the children's pet; the row of apples sputtering on the hearth; the basket of nuts close at hand; and the climax of all, the group of forms and faces circled around the fireplace. As one looks upon the scene there comes a feeling of homesickness, and we wish we might go back again to scenes like that which we hold dear in our memories. But each oncoming generation will know less of such scenes, for times are changed. The advent of the furnace and steam-heating plant has robbed us of the cheer and light of the fireplace; and one must feel that, while we have gained in convenience, we have lost in richness of cheer and

light; for there is something about the glow of the old fireside that grips the heart, invites fellowship, and arouses love. The fireplace in the Whittier home made home so comfortable and cheerful that those within cared little for the weather without. Whittier has paid a splendid compliment to the drawing power of that home when he says:

"Shut in from all the world without
We sat the clean winged hearth about
Content to let the north wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door.

What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow."

The poet has grown old; his hair is as white as was his sire's in that snow-bound home, but the memory of the old home still holds him. The faces seen around the fireside have vanished, the voices are hushed, but that fireplace scene is a prophecy to the poet as well as a memory. It foretells

another meeting-place; and that prophecy prompts the words of hope that many have learned to love.

"Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees
Who hopeless lays his dead away
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play.
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever Lord of Death
And Love can never lose its own."

In the home scene described in this poem there are two features that are prominent. The first is the pastimes engaged in by those at the fireside, and the second is the characters of those at the fireside as described by the poet. We will notice both of these features giving special attention to the characters.

The pastimes engaged in by the children of the home were of a distinct type. It will be observed that they were not of the frivolous or trashy sort; they were elevating. They possessed an intellectual value and

tended to culture. There was nothing in them calculated to dissipate any quality of manhood or womanhood. One of the curses of modern home life is the cheap and dangerous pastimes afforded the children. They are frequently taught to engage in practices that not only have no intellectual or culture value, but have a decidedly dangerous tendency. Children certainly should have amusements in the home, and plenty of them; but why not have the best? Why not have the pastimes such as will give not merely fun, but an impetus to intellectual and moral attainment?

In the Whittier home the pastimes were wholesome. The poet says they sped the time with stories old, wrought puzzles out, and riddles told, or stammered out their school-book lore. These were pastimes calculated to develop the best in the children. The stories and school-book lore developed the power of conversation. The puzzles and riddles quickened the power of thought; and all tended to stimulate the intellectual life.

Here was a schooling at home, and it was all done under the name of fun or pastime. Wise parents, those! And well may we pray the prayer made for Abou Ben Adam, "May their tribe increase!"

There are eight characters in the circle of that home described by Whittier. This number does not include all who were beneath the roof, but these eight are described especially. They are the father, mother, uncle, aunt, eldest sister, youngest sister, the schoolmaster, and the unnamed guest. It is not our purpose to present each of these characters in full. That would hardly be possible in a brief article. We will notice only those which seem of chief importance as stamping and molding the life of that home. Of these the father and mother stand first.

It is interesting to note with what reverence the poet speaks of his father. Why does he so speak? The father made himself worthy of it. Here is a picture of a father who has rare wisdom in making himself an idol of the children by showing them a ten-

der interest and appealing to the best within their natures. A father should ever be to his children an ideal. In the thought of the children he should be the best and greatest man in all the world; and it is within the power of a father to so enthrone himself in the thought of his children. He may do it by doing what this wise Quaker father did: becoming one with the children by entering into their interest and being a child again with them, and at the same time leading their thought to subjects that are elevating, serious, and helpful. Here the father tells stories to the children, and ever a child loves stories. But these are stories in which there is mingled something of history, of nature, and of life. In all the father's playing of the child with his children there is discoverable the educational purpose. He would not only entertain, but educate, and in the stories told there are seeds dropped that in the coming years are to grow into knowledge and character.

The mother is one with the father in pur-

pose and spirit. Her children hang with interest upon her words. But study those words and you find the same educational idea running through them. She deals with history, the scenes from her own life, her girlhood experiences, which give her children glimpses of other days. Nor does the good mother omit the Christian touch, but tells of "faith fire-winged by martyrdom" and of a Providence that draws the thought of the children to God. Thus the members around the fireside "sped the time with stories old, wrought puzzles out, and riddles told." It was a circle of children; some with white locks and bent forms, but children still. Little wonder the poet says of that cheerful scene on that stormy night:

> "What matter how the night behaved?
> What matter how the north wind raved?
> Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
> Could quench the hearth-fire's ruddy glow."

Nothing could quench the hearth-fire's ruddy glow, because of that spirit of fellowship and

mutual interest abounding there. Father and mother were children with the children, making home the dearest spot in all the world to them.

Fortunate is that home where children sit in attitude reverent and glad while parents speak, and where children treasure in their young hearts the words spoken. Those words will speak in memory long after the children have grown to manhood and womanhood. They will speak as voices from the past. Blessed is the one in whose memory those voices speak. Alas for him who as he goes hears no voices from other days inspiring him with ambition and with hope!

Such home scenes as described in this poem are important, as they affect the formation of character. A powerful place for forming character is the fireside, and emphasis needs to be placed upon the value of the fireside as a training-ground for character. So tremendous is the wholesome influence of a happy fireside that we suffer an irreparable loss when we allow that influence to

wane. We should carefully guard the home as the center of gravity for the child's life, and see that it is not neglected or despised while other dangerous and questionable substitutes are offered by a mercenary world. Children are much better off in a home scene like that in "Snow-Bound" than they are when in the unnatural and unwholesome environments of cheap shows and questionable amusements. Let the home scenes pass away and the vaudeville become the place of chief attraction to the child, and the loss in character and morals will be serious in the coming generation.

There are many of us who remember home scenes which we are unwilling should ever grow dim as the years hurry by. We sat around the fireside with the family; we read, and played games that had a real educational value; we listened to tales of historic and classic nature; we stood by the piano or organ and mingled our voices in song; and the influence of that scene is with us to-day—it can not die. To-day the need

is as great as ever for such homes and such scenes. Parents need to unite with children in making home the dearest spot on earth. Henry Ward Beecher could get down on his knees and play horse with the children. Robert Browning's father used to take Robert on his knee in the library, and the child would listen "with enthralled attention to the tale of Troy, with marvelous illustrations among the glowing coals in the fireplace." William E. Gladstone used to "teeter-totter" the children on his knee and tell them tales suited to their childish fancies. Dr. Hanson, the Baptist divine, was once thought by a servant girl to be insane because he romped so vigorously with the children in the back-yard. All these facts speak of the wisdom of the great in being children with the children and making home a dear spot for them. We need great emphasis here. Let the fireside scene of "Snow-Bound" never pass away. Let it be multiplied until it shall be reproduced in every home of our land.

While the father and mother are charac-

ters of particular importance in this home scene, there are other characters described, which should not be entirely omitted. The good uncle is worthy of mention. Evidently he was revered in the home, and his influence upon the young life in the family circle was salutary. He was a type of untaught genius. He was learned, and yet not taught in the schools. His learning was not that of books, but of instinct and experience. He was a friend of nature. Whittier describes him as

> "A simple, guileless, childlike man,
> Content to live where life began."

He was a man of sound judgment and much common sense. Withal he possessed marked character force, and this was the force that made the impression on young life. These rude, practical qualities constituted the uncle a character not soon forgotten. The poet holds him in sacred memory. The influence of such lives is to bind young lives not only to themselves, but to the virtues exhibited in their artless lives.

We are indebted not alone to the scholarly friends of early days—to those who were schooled in university halls: we owe a large debt to those plain, simple folk whose acquaintance with books was limited, but whose experience in nature's school was large. Seers they were of the common life, and they taught much that never could have been learned from books. They possessed a wisdom hardly born of earth, and by their words our young lives were led in wisdom's ways. Let us rear our monuments to the memory of the sage uncles who, learned in nature's school, were teachers of the way of truth to our young lives.

Another figure at the fireside sits enthroned in a sort of sacred glory by the poet's tribute. It is the old maid aunt. A blessed, holy, noble woman is she, as old maids are wont to be. She is a type of many worthy souls who, while deprived of much of life's joy, are yet givers of much of life's blessedness. These are women who are denied much, and yet grow sweet on the denial.

Their lives have not been turned to vibrate with the wifely privileges or motherly duties of domestic life, yet they offer no suggestion of discontent; they strike no note of discord, yet ever add a minor strain of sweetness that enriches the home life touched by them. Of this old-maid aunt Whittier says she was the

> "Sweetest woman ever Fate
> Perverse denied a household mate."

And when Whittier says that we all felt like saying, "Wait a moment, John; there are others;" for you and I know such lives that are as sweet as the life of Whittier's aunt, and while we will allow him to say his was one of the sweetest, we will not allow him to exclude our old-maid aunts by saying his was the sweetest. However, we will agree with him in the tribute he pays to these noble aunts and join with him in pronouncing an anathema upon all who would despise them, and with him say:

> "Be shame to him of woman born
> Who hath for such but thought of scorn."

There is much of pathos in the poet's reference to the youngest sister, the idol of the household; for she has left the circle of the living and, like the elder sister, has been laid to rest beneath the low, green tent; and as the heart of the poet overflows in its sorrow at the loss, it reveals much of his religious faith. He believes in the future existence, for he says that she is resting in the holy peace of paradise. He halfway believes in the nearness of our departed friends:

> "I can not feel that thou art far
> Since near at hand the angels are."

He believes fully in a conscious meeting of spirits in the hereafter, for he says:

> "And when the sunset gates unbar
> Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
> And white against the evening star
> The welcome of thy beckoning hand?"

The country school teacher who boarded with the Whittier family was also an important figure in the group at the fireside. The poet reveres his memory because the school-

master meant so much to his early days. He was a learned young man, full of spirit, and athletic in his tendencies. He was a man among men and a student among students. Just such a man was he as would appeal to a growing boy. From this teacher in his home the poet doubtless received much of his inspiration toward reading and some of his development in intelligence. A type he is of a large class of men and women who have left to our land a priceless heritage. They are the men and women who have been the instructors of our youth and who have created in our breasts yearning for culture, for manhood, for patriotism. They are the men who by setting a "schoolhouse plant on every hill and stretching in radiate nerve-lines, thence the quick wires of intelligence," have done much to bring our land to the position of prominence and power she enjoys to-day. Goldsmith, in his "Deserted Village," describes two characters who were forces in the affairs of the village life. One was the village preacher, and the other the

village teacher; and these two have ever been co-laborers in the advancing of the interests of mankind. Here Whittier is giving the school-teacher his share of credit. In this he teaches the world a lesson. Stand by the benefactors of the race. Honor the teachers of our youth. Stand by them in their toil. Their task is a hard one. Reserve your criticism and condemnation; speak rather the words that show that their work is appreciated and that the debt of the world to them is gladly acknowledged.

Not a character is described in that family circle but that in the description you may find the influence of that character on the life of the growing boy who came to be poet. The whole picture speaks in mighty words the power of home influence on young life. That influence the poet can not escape. That home he must ever love. And oft in memory he journeys back, nor would he go alone. To us he sends the invitation:

> "Sit with me by the homestead hearth
> And stretch the hands of memory forth
> To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze!"

Many of us gladly accept the invitation of the poet and warm the hands of memory at the wood-fire's blaze. We love the fireside and the old home. It was there our eyes were first opened to the world's largeness. There our thought was made to grasp the meaning of life. There our hearts were opened by the mystic keys of fellowship to display a resting-place for love. There our faith was first aroused to speak the name of God our Father. There the man that is to-day had his beginnings in the boy that was. Because of all this, home was the dearest spot on earth to us.

Home prepared us not for dreaming, but for doing. The voice of duty calls to the struggle for which a good home prepared us. Reluctantly, therefore, we must drop the curtain on the scene of home with its blessed memories and sacred influences and walk out into life's activities, saying with Whittier:

"I hear again the voice that bids
The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears;
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe flowers to-day!"

VIII

SAUL;
OR,
THE AWAKENING OF A SOUL

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J. G. Holland in his "Bitter-Sweet" makes one of his characters say, "It is a fearful thing to take in hand the guidance of a straying soul." Those whose lot it has been to become spiritual guides have felt the truth of that utterance. But it is just as true that it is a fearful thing to take in hand the task of awakening a soul that has fallen into the deadly stupor of despair. When all hope has gone out of life and the soul has become enslaved by a despair that would welcome death, it is a solemn task to attempt an awakening that shall rekindle hope and renew the wild joy of living. This is the task that is pictured in Robert Browning's poem "Saul."

The true poet is one who deals with momentous themes and makes his verse the vehicle for transmitting messages of worth. To make rhyme is not necessarily to make poetry. Poetry is more than rhyme. The light, senseless jingles that so often find their way into print are not poetry. To be a verse juggler is not to be a poet. The poet has serious business. He deals with important themes. It has been rightly said that true poetry has three themes: Life, Nature, and God. The work of the poet, then, is to be a student and interpreter of these three. His task is to grasp truth in its relation to God and nature and man, and through verse convey that truth to the world. It is for this reason that the poet deserves a place alongside of the prophet and the seer.

It is in this deeper sense that Browning is a true poet. He is a poet-student, a poet-philosopher, a poet-theologian. He is a type of the polished gentleman among men of letters. What Longfellow was as a precise gentleman and polished writer on this side of

the ocean, Browning was on the other side. Both were clean, true, and manly. A difference, however, exists in this, that in Longfellow the heart speaks oftenest, while in Browning the head speaks most. Browning is thought, rugged and profound. Longfellow thought, but when he wrote he spilled his heart on the page. He will be remembered more for the tender sentiment that appeals to the heart than for the deeper message that makes the brain ache. Browning poured his thought out on the page, and not infrequently the heart froze up while the mind was on fire.

Browning was unusual in his variety of attainment. His culture was many-sided. He was reared in an atmosphere of refinement. He heard the deeds of the Greek heroes discussed at the fireside when he was but a boy. He became a boy-student of classic language. He learned music and art. He became a good pianist. He modeled in clay with such aptness that his friends thought that he might have become a noted sculptor.

Back of all Browning's rare qualities lay a physical constitution so robust that it furnished an unfailing source of energy. Perhaps much of the vigor of his writings is due to the vigor of his physical manhood. Browning had no lifelong struggle with disease, as did Stevenson. He had no battle against physical misfortune, as did Milton or Prescott. He was the personification of health and strength. In his "Saul" he says, "O, the wild joy of living!" and, "How good is man's life, the mere living!" These expressions are doubtless the utterance of the poet's own experience. Blessed with health, strength, culture, and plenty of life's goods, he could with naturalness cry, "O, the wild joy of living!"

Being, as he was, a gentleman of polish, living on a high plane physically and mentally, it is not surprising that Browning's writings should strike the high, clear notes which characterize them. In his case no apology need be offered for the poet or the poetry so far as morality is concerned.

SAUL

One's introduction to the poetry of Browning is seldom a case of love at first sight. He is a poet who improves with acquaintance. The first impression of him is often a disappointment, because he is profound and somewhat obscure. His poetry is not so easily understood that he who runs may read. In fact, Browning can not be read; he must be studied. To understand him is not easy. When Browning had secretly married Elizabeth Barrett, William Wordsworth made this comment: "So Robert Browning has gone off with Elizabeth Barrett. Well, I hope they may understand each other—nobody else ever could." The comment may be somewhat severe, but it emphasizes a truth very apparent to every student of Browning, namely: that he is difficult to understand. His narratives, which one might suppose would be the easiest mastered, are made difficult by the burden of his philosophy of life and views of theology. His characters are so shrouded in idealistic conceptions and spiritual suggestiveness that there

must be a discriminating unrobing before their beauty or meaning is comprehended. One may read the "Evangeline" of Longfellow or the "Enoch Arden" of Tennyson and easily follow the onward movement of the narrative, and readily grasp the significance of the characters portrayed. But not so with Browning. Browning is a synonym for obscurity—or better, profundity. His poetry is a mine of gold, but the metal lies not in the surface. It is possessed by a process of digging. This is true of the poem "Saul," which is now under consideration.

The poem "Saul" has an historic background. It is based on the Biblical account of an incident that occurred in the life of King Saul, as recorded in 1 Samuel XVI., 14-23. This incident is placed in the period of Saul's reign as king of Israel. According to the Biblical account, when Saul had been anointed, the spirit of the Lord came upon him. In mind and heart he assumed the royal mien. He was full of optimism and kingly ambition. He thought noble thoughts

and did noble deeds. But finally it is said that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. The cause of this departure is represented as being Saul's rejection of the Lord. He became disobedient in heart, rebellious, and selfish, following personal ends rather than the will of God. Hence the Spirit of the Lord, which had been his abiding benefactor, departed from him.

Another statement is made in the account which is important. "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." A twofold change has then occurred in the inner life of Saul. The good Spirit had left him, the bad spirit has come to haunt him. Here is a picture of a man in a tragic situation. He is abandoned of good and possessed of evil. He is played upon by melancholy and gloom until he sinks into a state of utter despair. He is a man without hope or ambition, in the stupor of spiritual apathy.

In picturing this condition of Saul the sacred writer has been true to the laws of both psychology and religion. The mind is sub-

ject to the reign of hope or despair. When hope goes out despair comes in. And speaking religiously, the exodus of good from the life is the signal for the advent of evil. The human heart is no vacuum. It requires an occupant. Some force must live and rule within. And if that force be not good it will be evil. In this narrative Saul is one from whom good has departed, while evil has come.

In his condition of hopelessness one opportunity of relief is offered him. His servants suggest that a skilled harpist and singer be brought before him to sooth him by the power of song, and by the charm of music stir him back to life again. Saul having given his consent, David the son of Jesse is brought before him. A striking contrast is here presented by the sacred writer, which is too significant to be overlooked. Saul is represented as being one from whom the Spirit of the Lord has departed, while David is one filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Saul is swayed by the spirit of evil, and David by the spirit of good. It is a contest be-

tween spirits as well as men. The real task presented is the awakening of a soul that has been rocked to sleep by evil. The awakening is to be done by one filled with the Spirit of God.

The scene is therefore one worthy of the skill of a great artist or author. It is not surprising, then, that Browning has hit upon this scene and made it the foundation for one of his greatest poems. In his poem "Saul" he reproduces poetically the incident just narrated, and represents David as speaking his own description of what occurred. But Browning does not stop with the narrative merely. He uses it as a starting point only, and from it moves on to make some deductions theological and practical in their nature. In fact, Browning uses the poem as a vehicle for conveying his belief that love is an unfailing power of the Almighty which realizes itself in making the soul of man immortal.

In the introduction to the poem, Abner, the cousin of Saul and commander-in-chief of

his army, makes an address to David. In that address he says to David: "At last thou art come. Ere I tell, ere thou speak, kiss my cheek, wish me well." The salute is given, and then in his address Abner apprises David of the condition of King Saul, and of the extreme suspense which Abner and his friends have endured for the past three days, during which time Saul had been in his strange mood in the black mid-tent's silence. Abner further expresses the hope in his heart that David may be able to restore the king, and vows to neither eat nor drink until the news is brought back that the crisis is past and the king is restored.

The address of Abner having ended, David is represented by the poet as approaching the task of awakening the despondent spirit of Saul. True to the character of David as described in the Word, the poet pictures him as praying to the God of his fathers before he begins his solemn task. Then David runs to the tent where the king is. A second time he pauses to pray before begin-

ning his work. Then he addresses the king, "Here is David thy servant." Deathlike silence was the only answer. All was darkness within the tent. But a sunbeam which finally burst into the darkness of the tent revealed Saul. He leaned against the central tent pole, his arms outstretched along the cross-beam that ran to each side of the tent. He seemed to hang there like "the king serpent all heavily hangs in the pine till deliverance come with the springtime." David tuned his harp, and with music's aid began the work of awakening a soul blind and dumb. It is interesting to note the process of that awakening.

First, David played upon his harp tunes that may be called nature tunes. They were strains calculated to appeal to the creatures of the field. They were tunes David had played on the hillsides and in the valleys, and had noted their stirring effect upon the quail, the cricket, and the jerboa. Thus the harpist tested the king at the lowest level, seeming to recognize that the spirit of the man had left

him and that in his despair he had fallen to the level of the creatures of the field.

Then the harpist rose a step higher in the scale of life and played the tunes of human employments; tunes calculated to appeal not so much to the creatures of the field as to the spirit of man. He played the songs of the reapers, the funeral hymn, the wedding march, and the music of worship which the Levites used as they went up to the altar of God. Then the first sign of life was given by Saul. He groaned. The tunes of human employments had found an entrance somewhere through the armor of his deadness, and he groaned. Then David paused, held his breath, and listened in silence. Saul shuddered and his head moved till the jewels he wore in his turban sparkled. But the body moved not.

Encouraged by these signs of awakening David bent again to his task. Now he not only played, but sang. The human voice mingled with the music of the harp. And the subject of the song was life; the wild joy

of living. "How good is man's life, the mere living!" sang the musician. Then, in order to magnify the goodness of living, he began to awaken in the king the memories of the past. From the glory of living in general he passed to the personal life of the king. He went back to the boyhood days and called up memories of father, mother, brothers, and friends. He sang of the fame which had come to the king; the glory of one life in the kingdom, and the honor of the people lavished upon that one life, namely—King Saul!

Here the climax of the singer's effort is reached. Hand, heart, harp, and voice are united in the effort to arouse the king to life. The limit of the musician's ability is reached, and all the intensity of the life and the passion of the heart are poured forth in that one word "Saul." It is a call for the dead to awaken to life. As we hear it we are instinctively made to think of the Christ standing before the tomb in which a dead form had rested for four days, and crying, "Lazarus, come forth!" And here, as David

throws heart, harp, soul, and song into that word "Saul" it becomes a resurrection call. The result was life. "One long shudder thrilled all the tent till the very air tingled." The king now stood released before the singer. But the situation was still a terrible one; for while death was past, life had not fully come. The task still remained of nourishing an awakened spirit back to life and strength.

Again the harpist sang, but it was of a new theme—a theme to sustain the king where song had restored him. David had sung of mere mortal life held in common by man and brute, but now he sang a different song. It was of the immortality of the influence of man. As the palm tree shall decay and be known no more, but the palm wine, the fruit, shall endure into the winter, so, though the physical life of man shall pass away, yet the influence of his life shall endure to coming generations. So David sang. Saul may die, but his influence will be carried through the years. The harpist had sung of

the past joys of living and of the present glory of the king, but now at last he sang of the future stretch of his fame and influence.

Under the inspiration of this new song Saul's awakened spirit was quickened. He sank to the ground and listened to the singing until David touched on the fame that should be his in all time, and the praise that should come from all men. Then, as the thought of the immortality of influence found him, the king raised his limp arm and placed his hand as if in benediction on the head of the singer and looked searchingly into the face of the servant of God who had called him back to life. Then the heart of the singer leaped with a new impulse. It was the impulse of love. "And, O, all my heart, how it loved him!" Under the pressure of that impulse the singer cried, "Could I help thee, I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this. I would give thee new life altogether, as good ages hence as this moment."

Notice carefully the situation here. The

singer has tasted the experience of awakening a soul to life. An intense love for the awakened soul is kindled in the heart of the awakener. The outcome of that love is a desire to confer upon the awakened soul an eternal existence. The logic is that if there is joy in living there is greater joy in eternal living. But now a strange thing happens. In the experience taking place in the heart of the singer he sees a suggestion of what must have taken place in the heart of God. God has awakened the human soul to life. He loves the awakened life. His love can do nothing less than confer on that life an immortal existence. If man loving a mortal would confer on him immortal existence, God, loving mankind, can do nothing less. And so by this process of reasoning the singer passes from a desire for eternal life to a firm faith in the existence of that life, made possible by God's love. Passing thus from a singer to a believer, he cries: "I believe it. 'T is Thou, God, that gavest, 't is I who receive." And then follows the glorious

conclusion anticipating an eternal entrance into life: "O Saul, it shall be a Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me, thou shalt love and be loved by forever: a Hand like this hand shall throw open the gates of new live to thee! See the Christ stand!"

The conclusion of the poem represents a complete transformation as having taken place in the inner life of David. Like one walking through a strange world he found his way home from the tent of Saul that night. "The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews, and the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge." David passed through as a runner beset by the populace famished for news. But with the birth of a new day all trouble ceased and a strange calm flooded the world. All creatures seemed conscious of the new law of love that filled the singer's heart. The forest, the wild beast, the birds, even the serpent gave evidence of the new law's power.

And the little brooks murmured, "Even so, it is so."

What is the meaning of this masterpiece of Browning? The answer is not difficult in the light of what has been said before. Browning's Saul is a profound treatise on the life of man in its relation to God and humanity. It represents the dignity of life, the love of God, and the poet's faith in the immortality of the soul. The poem has its foundation in Browning's philosophy and theology. His philosophy deals with the life of man. In this thought living is glorious. "O, the wild joys of living." Life is a struggle upward out of despair and entanglements toward God. The end of the struggle is eternal life. One critic of Browning says, "Belief in a future life shines forth from every masterful poem he wrote. The soul of man can not be explained except in the light of a continuous and expanding life."

As in his philosophy he deals with human life, so in his theology Browning deals with the nature of God. Two elements predomi-

nate in God's nature, namely: power and love. God's power is creative. Nature and life are its products. God's love is supreme. It molds and stamps man's life and aids him in his upward struggle, crowning him at last with an eternal existence.

Having its foundation thus in philosophy and theology, this treatise exhibits life in its human and divine relationships. It presents the problem of life as it concerns God and man. In this presentation there are several principles of life apparent which should be noted for their practical significance as well as for the light they throw on the interpretation of the poem. Among these principles note the following:

1. One of the noblest functions of life is altruistic service; the awakening of another life. A suggestive picture is presented in the opening sections of Saul. David and Saul face each other. Saul is the despondent. David is the awakener. Both are types of conditions in life. Saul is a type of a large class of humanity who for various reasons

come to it. And say, the next time you run ag'in me, you can knock me clean down and I won't say a word." And then, after the lady had gone on, he turned to a chum and said, "Say, Jim, it 's fine to hev' somebody askin' your parding, ain't it?" Kind words and a considerate act had brought a new joy to that little life. Yes, it is fine to be the recipient of love or kindness. But there is something finer. It is to be the giver of love or kindness. Better is it in this world of need to be a singing David than a despairing Saul.

2. The reflex influence of altruistic service is the birth of love. Love for other lives grows with service given other lives. The Scriptures teach that where our treasure is there will our hearts be also. But it is just as true that where our service is there will our love be also.

It is a great thing to be in love with humanity. And one may be in love with humanity. How? By serving humanity. As one makes cost for others, one comes to love

others. As one lives selfishly, regard for others wanes. The secret of lack of interest in others is selfishness. The reason some people have no love for men is they have done no service for men. One can only begin to understand how much Christ loved men when one stops to consider how much He did for men. He did much and loved much. Follow the missionary for a day as he toils among the unfortunate people of a benighted land, or the deaconess as she ministers in the city in the haunts of the neglected poor, and at the close of the day ask what each has been doing. The world would answer, They have been serving much. But the real answer is, They have been loving much; for service ever coins itself into love, and they who spend much in service come back rich in love.

3. Love for life is a pledge of immortality. Deep in the soul of every normal man is the love of life. For his life man will suffer, toil, and spend. The last treasure he is willing to surrender is life. He loves it.

David loved life not only for himself, but for Saul. This love of life for self and others is a pledge of immortality. Its argument is that if man the creature loves life, God the Creator loves it more. And if man and God love it so, it can not be a transient thing, but everlasting. God, who is ever good, can not create such a love for the sake of disappointing it. If man's love for life would immortalize it, much more must God's love make it immortal. Faith in an immortal existence is therefore a necessary conclusion. This is the faith of Browning. He expresses his own feelings when he makes David say, "I believe it—see the Christ stand." The Christ stands in that faith, declaring Himself the resurrection and the life.

4. But finally the awakened soul becomes possessed of new conceptions of service and of life.

Service in Browning's thought is measured not by the outer deed, but by the intent of the heart. "What stops my despair? This: 't is not what a man does which ex-

alts him, but what man would do. See the king—I would help him, but can not, the wishes fall through. Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich, to fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which I know that my service is perfect." Here is a philosophy comforting and inspiring to those who yearn much but fail often. It is not what one does, but what one would do that makes commendable service. If the heart yearns much and the effort is sincere, the service is perfect, though the results remain unseen.

Life wears a new face when one is awakened from despondency or from sin. Browning has described an old-fashioned Christian experience when he pictures David as seeing a new face on all nature and observing the operation of a new law everywhere. The awakened soul gets a new view of life. Old things pass away, and all things become new. Let a man dethrone the evil spirit of despair or sin and get God into his life, and he has obtained a new vision, a new love, and a new hope.

Browning's "Saul" is a sermon on the greatness of life and the goodness of God in projecting that life into eternity. Its practical message is that life is so valuable no one has a right to sink it into despair or mar it by sin. Yet, if a soul becomes lethargized, the best tonic for it is a true vision of life and God. Aroused by that vision, the soul recognizes the wild joy of its own existence, catches a glimpse of the divine love that created life with its joy, and rises to the sublime plane of faith in the eternal duration of that life. As Browning expresses it, when this vision of life and God is seen, man may awake

"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this."

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